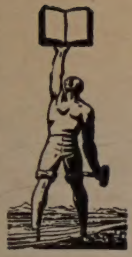

Mainstream

THE INVESTIGATOR

Thomas McGrath

Ralph Parker MOSCOW LITERARY LETTER

J. D. Bernal THE BIRTH OF REASON

Victor Perlo MONOPOLY IS NOT A GAME

Poems by Mario Casetta, Fred Cogswell, Charles Humboldt, and Paul Jarrico.

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Reviews of W. E. B. Du Bois' *The Ordeal of Mansart* and Alvah Bessie's *The un-Americans.*

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THE INVESTIGATOR

THOMAS MCGRATH

The story which follows is the self-contained first chapter of a novelette, *The Gates of Ivory, The Gates of Horn.* The complete work will be issued by the publishing house of *Mainstream* as a notable example of social criticism in the form of science fiction—The Editors.

"NOT GUILTY."

The Umpire put his hand under the edge of his desk and a great peony of light swam up out of the space above his head, sharpened into focus and drilled at the suspect.

"Again?"

"Not guilty!"

"Your pigeon," the Umpire said and turned his heavy head, his uninterested, blue wide-apart eyes toward the Investigator who sat in what was now almost shadow, a grey man in a grey suit who wore his youngish anonymous face like a mask. "Do you want to play him?"

"Have his Psychomutual score sheets been explained to him?"

"He's seen them." The Umpire turned his head to the Suspect. "Your last chance," he said. "You saw your PM score and you know what it means. Now, do you want to confess and ask for punishment, or do you want to play?"

"Not guilty."

"No choice then," the Investigator said. "Strap him and call the Witness."

The Umpire left his desk and went over to the Suspect. He touched a button and the metal bands came out, clamping the man's arms and legs. Another button and a web of wires came down over the Suspect's head and the back of his neck. Like a huge fly in a tiny net the man

shook and jerked in the chair; he began to curse in a shaky voice.

"Listen to that, would you?" the Umpire said indignantly. He went back to his desk and riffled the PM score sheet. "Predictable I suppose. Section 7-34-C—you notice it? Violence."

"Of course," the Investigator said boredly. "It's in all of them. Standard reaction. Probably in your PM sheet too." He paused for a moment to let the Umpire get the full effect of it; then he said coldly: "It's not your job to get involved in this. You're a legal neutral. That's why you're the Umpire, remember?"

"Oh sure," the Umpire gave a little laugh, like the tentative beginning of a scale, but he did not complete it. He glanced at the grey figure of the Investigator in the shadow, as if unsure how to take him. "You're a great kidder," he said, more heavily than he had intended.

"I never joke. The law is a serious thing and it would be a good idea if you were to remember that. Now get the Witness in here."

The Witness was already in the room. His mask gleaming faintly, he came forward to the box at the edge of the little pond of fierce light in which the Suspect floated like a witch on a ducking stool.

"Ready," he said.

"You know the Suspect?" the Investigator asked him.

"Yes sir. William Horne. H-O-R-N or H-O-R-N-E.

Forty-four Court Street, New Pasadena."

"Smith!" the Suspect said. "My name is William Smith. I just got in from Frisco."

"Court street is skidrow, isn't it?" the Investigator asked.

"Skidrow, yes sir." the Witness paused a moment. "Forty four Court is a transient hotel. Mostly for the workless. It's . . ."

"I'll ask the questions. Speak when you're asked to speak!"

"Yes sir," the Witness said a little breathlessly.

"What is the nature of your charge against Mr. Horne?"

"Conspiring, sir."

"General or specific?"

"General, I guess, sir. Yes sir, general."

There was a moment of silence while the Witness squirmed in his chair.

"Sir," he said, "What I mean is - - "

The voice of the Investigator lashed at him. "What is your name, Witness?'

"Jones, sir. Earnest M."

" How long have you been working as an informer?"

"Six—six months sir. I'm—I'm a Tech Three, sir. I—"

"Don't you know that a charge of general conspiracy does not require the presence of an informer at the investigation, that a suspect charged with general conspiracy can be sentenced by an Umpire without hearing, sentence not to exceed twenty-nine years in the Venus Penal Colony, the tapioca swamps?"

"Sir, I - -"

"Better be careful." It was the Suspect speaking now. "Better be careful, stoolpigeon. You'll be sitting where I'm sitting." He began to laugh.

"Shut up, you!" the Umpire roared at him. "Shut up or I'll juice you!"

"Well, Mister Jones?"

"It's general, sir—the charge, I mean. But it's also specific."

"Go on."

"Criticizing spellcasts, sir."

"Which ones?"

"All of them. The advertising. He - -"

"Criticism of advertising plugs is not a crime. I know there have been cases where it has been punished, by overzealous investigators. But Philistinism - - as the Punishment Department which pays you should have made clear - - is characterized as a tendency, not a crime."

"Yes sir, I know that sir," the witness said all-in-a-rush. "But he turned one off. Sabotage, sir."

Again there was a moment of silence, through which they could hear the quick heavy breathing of the Suspect.

"That is serious," the Investigator said, keeping his voice neutral.

"Listen!" the Suspect said. "He's not telling it right! He's - - "

"You'll have a chance to reply," the Investigator said, but the Suspect was shouting now and the Investigator could not be sure that he heard.

"Shut up!" the Umpire bellowed again.

"God damn you, don't tell me to shut up! It's my life that's at stake! Make him tell the truth, damn him! I - - "

The Investigator nodded and the Umpire's hand went forward. There was a momentary crackle, the faintest smell of ozone. A tentacle at the prisoner's neck twitched delicately and the man leaped against the metal clamps and then was still, his breathing harsh and ragged.

"Anything else?" the Investigator asked.

"Yes sir," the Witness said. "A book."

"Book?"

"History book, sir."

"Well." Again the moment of silence.

"Suspect can read sir."

"I should suppose so, if he has a book."

"All done?" the Umpire was bored now that all the evidence was in. He took out a small knife and began cleaning his nails.

"Let him talk."

The Umpire pushed the rheostat control on his desk and the prisoner straightened and his voice bloomed out in a great rush of profanity.

"All right," the Investigator said. "You've heard the evidence against you. What have you to say about it."

"He's a liar, a damned liar!"

"You saw him turn off the spellcast?" the Investigator asked the Witness.

"I'll swear to it."

"Same thing. You have the book, I suppose?"

"Yes sir." The Witness held it up: dark, heavy, uninteresting looking. The print would be too small, the Investigator knew; there would be handwritten notes crammed in the margins, the bottom of every page would be a jungle of footnotes: a dangerous book. Suddenly, inexplicably, he was tired and discouraged.

"Damn you!" the Suspect cursed at the Witness. "Who are you? Take off that mask. I got a right to know who's condemning me!"

"Bastard!" The Umpire dropped his pen-knife and straightened in his seat. His hand flashed to the rheostat. Again the tentacle whipped at the neck of the Suspect and the man leaped in the chair.

"Stop it!" The Investigator stood up at his desk. "You're neutral," he said to the Umpire. "Turn it off. Be neutral."

"You heard him!"

"Yes." He turned to the Suspect. "You know better than to say a thing like that." he said. "You're not allowed to impugn the character of an informer. That in itself is conspiracy. General conspiracy, it is true, but it doesn't help your case. The profession of informer is an honorable one and not to be vilified. And the Thirty-Ninth Amendment fully guarantees their rights, one of which is to be masked and anonymous in any investigation. That is why they are all called Jones. Now let's have no more of these outbursts. Do you want to make a statement?"

"Yes." All the fight seemed to have gone from the Suspect. "I did turn off the spellcast, all right. It was in this hotel on Court street. I'd just come in from the mountains - - trying to kill some deer to take me through the winter. I'm a workless stiff all right and I do field work with the fruit tramps when there's work, but it's hard getting through the winter. So I didn't get anything and I figured to go farther south and try for a job and I was staying at this hotel."

"Briefly, please."

"There was this old bindle stiff there and he was sick and he couldn't sleep with the spellcast on. All of us in the flopjoint felt sorry for him. So I turned it off." They waited without speaking. "Somebody had to," the Suspect said defiantly.

"And the book?"

"I didn't have any book. It's true I can read, but I didn't have any book. If I did, I'd have sold it in the Black Market. Probably get three, four hundred for a book that thick. I could use the money."

"You deny ownership then?"

"He must have planted it in my stuff."

"Let me have the book."

The Witness handed it across and the Investigator took it, feeling, as he always did when handling a book, a queer tingling in his fingertips; feeling too the momentary surprise he always felt at the materiality of the book, it's gross and actual body, as if it should somehow have been formed all of an airy and electric nothing.

He opened the book, holding it so that he could look at the endpapers against the fierce light that shone on the Suspect. Yes, it was there, the stamped P.D., the stamp of the Punishment Department. It had been efficiently erased, but against the light he could read it clearly. So the Suspect was right, the book had been planted. Damn them, he thought wearily, why can't they once, just once, get a new book and do a decent job? and turning to the Suspect said:

"There's something here that might have been your signature. It's been erased." And hurried on then so that the Suspect would not begin to shout his denials: "I find that the charge has been sustained. Reason for turning off the spellcast is insufficient. Coupling that with your failure to deny opposition to the advertisements, I can only conclude that you are an information saboteur. Ownership of the book I take as a separate charge. As you know it is not unlawful to own all books, although in these days of advanced scientific art, it is certainly bad taste. Ownership of a history book, is, of course, felonious. I have no choice but to condemn you. Have you anything to say?"

"It's a lie. All of you know it's a lie, but still you're going to finish me. Isn't that right?"

"You've been investigated in complete accord with the procedures of the Punishment Department. There is evidence - - some of which you have admitted yourself. Even without such evidence, many investigations would demand your punishment. Considering your attitude and your PM score, apart from all evidence, it is clear in what direction you are tending."

Talking to the Suspect, he forgot the Witness, the planted book, and was for the first time really interested in the case. It was clear enough that Horn or Horne or Smith or whatever his name was (Horn was probably a case in the files of the PD which they wanted to close and they were using the Suspect to kill two birds with one stone, he thought) was guilty - - - if not now, then in a year; if not in act, then in thought; and he wanted the Suspect to understand this. He went on talking to him while the Umpire cleaned his nails and the Witness leaned forward, his mask gleaming, hanging on every word: one day he, too, might be an Investigator.

"You have to understand," the Investigator said, "that in a highly organized society such as ours, one involving hundreds of millions of people and the greatest degree of division of labor and specialization, it is not possible to allow a wide tolerance for the idiosyncracies of individuals. In a less specialized society, yes; among your friends, hunting in the mountains, yes; but not in ours. You think that we are being vindictive, but we are only trying to save people like yourself from the hazards of their individuality. If you were my own brother, I would want the same thing for you, for the good of all of us. I am not a vindictive man; I love our country. We must remember the words: *One nation indivisible with efficiency and punishment for all.*"

There was a long pause when he finished. The Umpire put away his pen-knife and yawned delicately.

"You're crazy," the Suspect said finally. "You - - why by God you want me to *forgive* you - - you want me to tell you you're right. Well, you're a monster. You're *not* right. You—oh, Christ, get it over with."

The Umpire looked at the Investigator, shrugging, and the Witness hunched forward in his chair. The Investigator put his hand under the side of his desk. For just an instant he hesitated, trying to think what he might say that would make it clear, that would explain it all fairly and clearly to the Suspect so that the Suspect might admit that he understood - - as the Investigator felt that he himself would understand if he were in the chair and their roles reversed. In that instant he felt an empathy with the Suspect, imagined himself in the chair, and shuddered. His finger went down on the switch.

For a fraction of a second it seemed that nothing would happen. They were all frozen in place like pieces of statuary while the Suspect lolled in his chair. Then he leaped against the metal restrainers, the air hummed briefly, and he was still. The Witness went quickly out, making strangled sounds under his mask, and the Umpire stepped over to the Suspect, folded back an eyelid and nodded.

"Done."

He looked at the Investigator for a long moment, enigmatically, and then shrugged as if shifting something from his back. The Investigator was busying himself filling up his brief case.

"Open and shut," the Umpire said. He shook his heavy head as if to clear it and his eyes became blank and indifferent again.

"What is the name of the witness?" the Investigator asked.

"Witness? Oh. Johnson. Martin Johnson. Why?"

"I thought he was pretty bad. I'm wondering about him."

"Yes?" For a moment the Umpire was interested, then he laughed. "New," he said. "Raw. No experience."

"I wondered."

The Umpire laughed again. "Going to investigate him?"

"I might. We have to be sure. We have to suspect everyone."

"Yes."

He watched the gray figure of the Investigator as the man walked across to the door. For just a moment it seemed that the Umpire was on the point of speaking. Then the Investigator was gone. The Umpire began to hum tunelessly through his teeth. He took out his pen-knife again. He held his elbows against his body to keep his hands from shaking.

The office was at the end of the hall, an unpretentious plate of one-way glass with painted on it a picture of a man carrying a huge load of nondescript objects and beside it a realistic, disturbing drawing of an eye like something out of an oculist's magazine. Printed below the symbols was his name, *John Cary,* and his profession: *Investigator.* He put his thumb against the identifier key and the door swung silently open and he went across to his desk.

It satisfied him. Blank as the moon or the sandy wastes of the Sahara, it seemed all innocence and functional surface, but he was not sure until he had gone over it with a magnifier and an infra-red Tracker. Yes, it was just as he had left it. He put the brief-case on it now and sat down and fumbled in a drawer for his pipe. Lighting it, he saw the flowers.

The match burnt his fingers and the shock of pain pushed back his fear and he got up from the desk and went over to them. Sitting on top of the shimmer of the old-fashioned space-warp filing case, they seemed to hang in the air, remote and impalpable as a dream symbol.

He cut off the field of the case and now, perched on the battered

steel boxes of the file, the flowers regained a certain reality. Too much, perhaps. Closer, their perfume was terribly strong, cloying and drug-like, and for a moment he nearly gagged. Then, suddenly, he realized that, barbaric as it was, he liked it, and now he felt an irrational guilt along with his fear. They were roses, he thought, and some lines from a forbidden book floated into his head, borne on the scent of the flowers: *My love is like a red, red rose.* And the commentary on it: "the language is non-symbolic, for no conventional acceptation will make the paraphrase, 'my fiancee is a flower of the genus rosacea var. red' a statement containing the poetic emotion expressed in the original statement" - - all meaningless words.

The initial guilt was gone now and he put his mind to the problem of the flowers. Somebody had got into the office, that was plain, and the roses—they were presumably some kind of warning. For a moment the extent of conspiracy and sedition seemed monstrous, too great and pervasive to cope with, but he forced himself to go on thinking. The flowers would have been terribly expensive—his full week's salary, he thought, wondering how he knew since he never had bought any. Flowers were an enormous luxury now, and buying them constituted a kind of criticism of a society too busy and mechanized to allow them more than marginal existence. Expensive, then. And where would one buy them? There were few shops. One, he remembered, in the financial district of New Wall Street. Another in the suburb where he himself lived. Wild flowers, those were, brought in by trappers and Indians from the Unoccupied Country. . . .

- - Why did he feel guilty?

Suddenly he began to laugh. He nuzzled his face into the flowers and took a long dizzying breath and laughed again. Behind him the intercom crackled and popped and Gannell said "I'm coming in." He switched on the field, the files disappeared in their watery shimmer, and he picked the vase of flowers from their top and carried them over to his desk. He was still chuckling, lighting his pipe, when his assistant came into the room.

At forty, Gannell, Chief of the technical section and second in command to Cary, was hardly older than his Chief but he looked older. He looked like a piece of eroded sculpture, Cary thought; the bald, beaked, owlish head of a totem-pole.

"Hello, Gannell," Cary said.

"Hello, John. And congratulations on that thing this afternoon. Nicely handled."

Thanks. It's tiresome work."

"Tiresome?"

"I mean all the work that goes into it. All the energy of umpires and stoolpigeons and investigators, the Punishment Department organization, the Legal Corps—all that. And all simply to juice a workless unimportant man. It doesn't seem very efficient, sometimes."

"I see what you mean. Still, it has to be done."

"Yes. But at the cost of all that effort? Take this one this afternoon. Probably not even guilty as charged. Of course by extrapolation we know that he *was* guilty, either now or next week, but look at the work to convict!"

"Form," Gannell said. "Got to be done with proper form. By the way, what's this the Umpire said about your questioning the Witness?"

"Something about him seemed wrong." Cary fiddled with his pipe, thinking of how might be the best way to put it. "Look," he said. "I know that the best kind of informer is the paranoid, and I know that the profession of informer has made it possible to create a real economic function for this kind of psycho. But there was something haywire about this one. Too clumsy. You know how a schizo is—all cleverness and assurance. Not this one. So I wondered."

"Yes?" Gannell looked at him curiously.

"I was thinking—do you suppose that a sane one might have slipped through on us?"

"Not likely. Do you suspect him?"

"We have to suspect everyone. Even ourselves."

"Oh, but - - "Gannell's rock-like head came up. Like a long-necked dinosaur he had been feeding on the bottom-grass of his own problems while the waters of the conversation lapped above his head. "What do you mean by that, John?"

"Just thinking. This case this afternoon had to do with a fellow who turned off a spellcast. Supposed to have had a history book too, but that was planted, I think. Well, everybody has a certain happiness quota and watching spellcasts is an acceptable way of filling it. But have you noticed how *much* people watch them? Riding home at night on the freeway, that's all they do."

"But that's what they *should* do!"

"Sure. But how many hours can you spend at spellcasts without its becoming an inverted criticism of the culture? When does it become an *avoidance* of responsibility?"

"I see what you mean," Gannell said thoughtfully. The heavy face, like a stone bird, brooded on the egg of the problem.

"Even ourselves are suspect," Cary said. "Notice these?" He gestured at the flowers.

"Me. I bought them. Brought them in and forgot about them—had a pretty bad time for a while—thought somebody had been in the office—couldn't recall for several minutes that I'd bought them myself."

Gannell again looked at him as if Cary had been just newly born in the chair in front of him.

"Well," he said. "At last. I thought you were made out of steel but you're human after all."

"What?"

"You've finally done it—overworked yourself. Happens to all of us after a while in this business. So much suspicion, I suppose. We get so that even our own acts seem questionable. Then we begin to forget them. Occupational fatigue. *Virus Investigatoris,* I call it—and I hope you won't begin to look at me suspiciously because I know a bit of another language. Well, John, after all these years you're finally going to have to take a vacation."

"I suppose so. But, damn it, the flowers - -"

"Don't worry about them. After all, they're not seditious."

"They're questionable."

"Not in relation to you," Gannel said, laughing.

"I laughed too. But it's not funny. I don't like that side of myself."

"Fatigue."

"Yes. But it shows something weak."

"For God's sake man, if we begin to doubt ourselves, where are we at? A moment ago you talked of all the work that goes into a juicing. Inference: we should be allowed to juice when we think necessary—be Witness and Umpire and Punisher all rolled into one. But how in the name of heaven can we do that if we doubt our *own* motives? The next step would be a failure to convict *anyone* since if our own motives are suspect there is absolutely *nothing* in the world to sanction our judgements and our actions."

"Perhaps if there were something outside us—if the law were really absolute—even more absolute than the Political Corporation - -"

"Now there you *are* on dangerous ground," Gannell said quietly. "*Whose* absolute would it be?"

"Yes," Cary said. He thought of the Suspect and the millions like him and felt again, as he had when he had first seen the flowers, the sense of heaviness, almost of defeat, imagining a plot as pervasive and impalpable as fog. "Yes, I suppose you're right."

"Hell yes, I'm right," Gannell said and his face unlocked itself in a grin like a mortal wound. "You're beat out and you need a rest."

"Sure." Cary had a feeling of such tiredness that he felt he could never

again be rested. He picked up his briefcase, shuffled some papers into it, and picked up his hat.

"You want these?" Gannell gestured at the roses.

"No." The fragrance of the flowers now seemed sickening to Cary. "I'll get rid of them."

Gannell took the flowers out of the vase and carried them to the time file. He opened the door, tossed the flowers inside, flipped the door shut and spun the dials.

"Always get a kick out of this," he told Cary. "Got one of these things at home. Perfect for a garbage disposal unit. If they can ever get the price down on them, everybody'll have one. And sometime they'll build them big enough for travel."

"I suppose so. Where did you send them?"

"Oh, the future, of course. Can't tell what sort of change it might make if we sent them into the past. Always send stuff to the distant future."

"But what about its effect there?"

"Oh well," Gannell laughed, "We can't be worried about that can we? It's *now* that's important." Still laughing he followed Cary out of the room.

Now it was night and there was a strong wind blowing. Now he came out of the building and onto the open beltline and pulled on his goggles to protect his eyes against the smog. Now it was at least breathable, so that he did not need the gas mask, and on impulse he decided to walk to the car-creche. The belt line was covered with homeward-going workers, most of them from the great buildings that pushed into the murky sky along all the streets. He joined them now, a youngish man of middle height with brown nondescript hair and a face that was neither handsome or homely, carrying his fear with him like a man with a live grenade in his pocket. Riding the beltline, leaping from slow to fast channels and back again, working himself toward his destination, did not give him time to think. At the end of the line he took the narrow seldom-used sidewalk to the corner, turned it and paused automatically to see if he were being followed.

It was quite dark now. Like tired fireflies the windows of the huge buildings winked and went out, and only the phallic monolith of Amalgamated Joy was still lighted. It seemed to Cary that it was on fire, burning, that it would consume the city. He pushed the notion away with a tired vehemence, recording automatically against himself that it was a seditious thought, and then attempted to discount it, as he had the flowers, on the

ground that he was worn out, needed a rest.

But the tiredness, the forgetting, that, too, was suspect. An image, blown in perhaps on the wind from the desert, the wind which had cleared out a part of the smog, grew in his mind: snakes in a pit, biting each other, the last snake biting at his own tail, swallowing itself - -

He shuddered and pushed the thought out of his head, thinking of the town on its narrow shelf between the sea and the desert, between the fixed death of the bleached skulls and wind warped stone of the desert and the chaotic turbulence and swarming life of the sea. He hated the wind.

Sticks tapped on the street. Suddenly he was clearheaded and competent again and he put his back against the building, his hand on the B-gun, and waited. Dry and insect-like, the sound approached. The man came around the corner, his white cane clapping the sidewalk briskly. Clipped to his head directly in front of his eyes, the tiny spellcast screen blazed with white light. It was one of the Hands.

"Halt!"

"Yes, sir?"

The Hand paused and his stick went out like a stiffened tentacle, but he did not turn off the spellcast. Disciplined, Cary thought approvingly, but he kept his voice cold.

"What are you doing out at this time of the night?"

"Going home, sir. I've got a work permit, sir. Half hour a day—"

"You're not allowed out after dark."

"Permission, sir. Give me permission to walk home. I had my spellcast going, sir."

"Right." Cary took the paper the man passed across, glanced at it and handed it back. "You'd better get going. The Joy Boys will be roaming the streets pretty soon. The Mohawks and the Hellfire Club—you know what they do to work addicts."

"Yes sir." The Hand shoved the paper in his pocket and headed for the beltline station.

Cary watched him go - - the stick tapping faster now, the tiny screen like a small pillar of fire leading the man on - - and felt a new resentment. He was not on principle a hater of what had come to be called "work addicts" by responsible citymen, nor was he a flagwaver—he never bothered to think of the abortive insurrection when the Hands had revolted, demanding the right to work and an end to the dormitory life to which, for nearly a century, they had been confined like drones. The revolution had been smothered in its own blood and after that there

had been a rush of illegal pioneering from the cities to the Unoccupied Country, that almost unpopulated and savage area between the city-strips of the two coasts. Then the migration had to be stamped out, since the system needed a large body of consumers. Finally, in order to head off another revolution it was decided to allow the Hands enough occasional work to syphon off some of their discontent.

It was a wise policy, Cary knew—he did not, like the Joy Boys who had never read Veblen and knew nothing of the problems of a conspicuous consumption economy and who only talked rather vaguely of Wholly Using (like *Holy Dying,* Cary suddenly thought; now where did *that* come in? I'm becoming a living library of forbidden books)—he did not condemn the Engineers who had made the law allowing the Hands to work. No, that was smart. Political Engineering. But what did disturb him was that there was at least implied sedition in working. It was, in its way, a criticism of the Political Corporation. But one that must be allowed. It was a disturbing paradox.

He found that, without thinking, he had started through the park. The flowers had just been freshly painted, and they gleamed, pale pastels and brilliant primaries, under the lights. The leaves had been changed too, on the tin trees, and the autumn set rustled crisply in the wind.

But Nature did not satisfy. The chrome lilies creaked a bit in the light breeze, the mechanical squirrels tirelessly gathered the plastic acorns, the wild dry cataract of light that was the fountain leaped in neonic glory, but there was no water to bless or make fertile.

Now in the deep evening the caretakers appeared to close the flowers and shut off the squirrels. One of them climbed into a tree close to the bench Cary sat on and immediately the sound of birdsong rang down from the metal branches. A nightingale, Cary thought with pleasure; but he was not sure: it might have been a mockingbird or even, he thought, trying to remember the names, a nightjar. The workless stiffs were filling the tiny park now, the semi-outlaws who refused to become Hands and who managed a marginal existence, working in summer on the few luxury-product farms where work was still permitted, hunting for winter food in the mountains. Bearded and shabby, each with his bindle on his back, they took places under the trees and spread their blankets for the night. Here and there a Sterno lamp glowed into life, and Cary smelled chicory and barley tea being boiled. Somewhere a harmonica began; the dark longing of a blues drifted on the night air, a forbidden tune, but the Beaters did not appear since the park *was* the freedom which the Constitution guaranteed.

Rather drink muddy water, sleep in a hollow log—sharp and imper-

sonal as pain the song cut into Cary's reverie. He was clenched in a long moment of unbearable nostalgia in which the blues, the smell of the coffee, seemed charged with the terrible meaningfulness of dreams, and the intolerable birdsong—nightingale or mockingbird—fell like the slow drops of Chinese water torture. An awful wish (what was it—to go home? to be a child? to be free?) grew inside him like one of the metal trees; he felt it grow and blossom inside him, a big bush of pain, cutting and hurting. But at the same time there was a kind of contentment.

Then the harmonica was silent: he heard only the crazy song of the mechanical bird: and he shook his head impatiently and started out of the park.

On the other side there was the inevitable soap-boxer. An old man, this one, with a ragged nimbus of hair and the crazy eyes of a prophet, he shook a long stick at the crowd of listeners.

"—who is God of this world," the speaker was saying. "Yes, I know there are grumblers among you, Men of no faith. Unwilling to admit their guilt, they sleep under the tin trees but sleep lightly, rising early and leaving the city by little used streets, following the birds to the north or the south in the swing of the seasons, each with a book hidden away somewhere in a hollow tree or behind the embankments of a bridge at a dry river, hiding in their heads a forbidden song or the scrap of an old story. Oh yes, I know them well, for haven't I in my inward and guilty youth, walked the City with my secrets loud in my head, groaning and turning the fiery wheel through the hundred last seasons of the mortal wish? For I have been as lost as any of you now.

"All roads lead to Rome and all roads lead to the city of the damned. You may enter by the gate of the North, the cold gate of the terrorless and homeless intellect; or through the hot south gate of lust; or through the irresponsible and dreamy eastern gate of the ego, or through the western gate with its dream of human perfection—even this last gate which is the water gate of birth, the gate of the ocean where everything known or to be known has its twin and counterpart (gate we do not have since our city is built at the edge of the sea) even this gate is the gate of vanity and sin.

"And how could it be otherwise? For if one were to enter the City sinless, to live a blameless life, would we not all be foul beside him? I have called for water from the dry fountain—is that not blasphemy? But I have been given Light. The accuser who is God of this world is not so unkind as to show us a man who is good. He has given us understanding instead.

"For is it not true that all action is guilt? To sing is vanity; to think is guilt and sin. And this is true because all action is tainted and impure. Did not this God create a world, and was it not a vanity, and did it not bring with it Judgment and that Lucifer, the Devil, who is God's judge? Yea, it was a wise God, for He saw His guilt and created the Devil to be His punisher, just as we have been granted the Investigators and the Beaters and the Legal Engineering to be ours, to juice us, to burn us."

The preacher lifted his hand in gesture toward the flaming spire of Amalgamated Joy. "What is our image of judgment but the consuming fire?"

There were many listeners now, and the soap-boxer lifted his head and continued speaking. His eyes—he was not wearing goggles—burned with his conviction and it seemed to Cary that the man was speaking directly at him.

"Give up the vanities of wish and action, brothers. Put them away with the songs that are better forgotten, the letters better burned, the whores we tupped in the knocking house of our youth. For the great judgment is coming—and the Accuser. I see him now: the iron outriders, the Furies chained to wheels of fire while the great beaked bird screams in the wild heaven. Yes, and the rivers running in blood, the ice wall moving down from the barren mountains in the time when every love is false and every dream a nightmare. Oh hear! That monstrous bird screams in the cold night wind! He is coming! The Accuser! The Accuser who is God of this world!"

The bony finger of the crazy old man pointed off into the darkness over Cary's shoulder. Then Cary saw the bulge of prophecy leave the eyes of the man and sudden fear come into them, and involuntarily he turned his head. It was the Beaters. Cary heard their happy, childish laughter as they came out of the darkness of the park and fell on the ring of listeners, their polished pick-handles flashing in the corner light. The pick-handles rose and fell, a regular, thudding sound as they smashed against flesh, heavier than the screams and groans of the men and the laughter of the Beaters themselves. Cary found himself shouting, wrestling with one of the Beaters, trying to tear the pick-handle from the man's grasp. The Bearer laughed, ripped the club away, and started to swing. Then he recognized the Investigator and his face got sulky and he dropped the pick-handle.

"You don't want us to have any fun," he said sullenly.

Cary snatched the whistle from the man's belt and blew a long blast. The beating stopped. The listeners had run, most of them, except for a dozen or more who lay on the ground, groaning and trying to drag them-

selves away. Three Beaters lay on the pavement also, one with his throat neatly cut. The others stood around, grinning and laughing.

"Who's in charge here?"

"Me." It was the man whose club Cary had wrestled for.

"What's the meaning of this? You know freespeech is allowed in the park!"

"Ah, we give them a roust now and then. They get too snotty if we don't."

"It's a violation of your orders."

"Oh yeah, but who cares?" The Beater grinned and the others broke into laughter.

"Our job's to beat," one of them said seriously.

Christ, thought Cary, what can you do with these morons? "You'd better take care of that fellow," he said, pointed to the Beater whose throat had been cut. The last of the bindle stiffs who had been listening to the soap-boxer had crawled away. The old man, too, was gone.

One of the Beaters nudged the man on the ground with his toe. The nearly severed head flopped to one side and the Beaters howled with laughter.

"Damn it," Cary said, "if you wanted to do something, why didn't you arrest the old man?"

"Not guilty," the chief Beater said. "Hes always comin in and confessin something new. Made up things. Comes in every day. Besides, he's the best speaker. He gets the biggest crowds like tonight and that's when we get our kicks. See?"

Cary said nothing. He turned away and walked out of the park, hearing behind him the shouted laughter of the Beaters hauling away their dead.

It had been a rotten day. He went directly now to the car creche and got his vehicle and led it from among the crowded machines, holding the reins at the end of the long snaky neck of the power-pickup. Once outside the creche he put the neck down over the power filament which was inlaid in the street, felt the field catch a foot above the asphalt, the neck straight out now as if drinking from an invisible stream. Then he got into the car, set it for automatic, and leaned back. It was a long hour to his house in the suburb of San Francisco.

Sitting relaxed, a tide of images from the activities of the day washed over him and he saw again the verniered dials of the time file, felt again the absolute cold of time in his bones.

Far ahead something flickered onto the highway, almost empty now in the approach to San Luis. For an instant he felt the leap of fear and

then recognized what it was. Without thinking he flicked the drive switch to manual and turned the car out of the lane. The thing ahead was caught, crucified in the stream of pitiless light for a fraction of a second that was too long. It tried to dodge, Cary swerved the car slightly, saw the thing loom bigger in his light, felt the thump and splatter, the matchstick crackle of bone as they hit. The car lurched and skidded and then he had it under control again. He moved back into his lane, switched to automatic and saw the snaky neck of the pickup dream once more toward the copper filament.

Sitting back, he felt a sudden tiredness like a disease and thought of the Suspect, of Gannel.

He was sorry now for the rabbit he had hit. As the car slowed, beginning its long approach to the suburb of San Francisco, he flashed on the spellcast and his nausea gradually disappeared. With his arms crossed over his chest he hardly noticed that he was shivering.

MOSCOW LITERARY LETTER

RALPH PARKER

IT IS tempting to describe Vladimir Dudintsev, thirty-nine-year-old author of *Not By Bread Alone** as a casualty of the Hungarian events, one who published a novel in days of thaw only to find his fingers nipped by an unexpected return of winter. But that would be misleading. In fact, the story is much more complicated.

Dudintsev recently told a meeting of Moscow writers and critics that the idea of writing this novel came to him when he was lying in a slit-trench watching a heavily outnumbered group of Messerschmitts worsting Soviet fighters. That was in the summer of 1941. "It came as a fearful shock to me: I had always heard that our aircraft flew better and faster than any others. . . . I have been accused of casting slurs on Soviet life. That is not so. I simply want to prevent a repetition of what I saw then."

Now, taken at their face value those words are highly revealing. They mean that Dudintsev considers the theme of his novel to be that familiar one which in various forms dominates most Soviet novels: the struggle of the new against the old or obsolescent. And it would be quite natural that, writing in 1955, the year in which Bulganin spoke frankly of the Soviet Union's technological backwardness vis-a-vis the West, Dudintsev should have felt emboldened to write without pulling his punches. *Not By Bread Alone*, let me recall, *is* about an inventor of a technological process which while primarily intended for civil application turns out to have highly interesting features for national defense. And the story of Lopatkin's life with his machine is indeed one of constant, stubborn and ultimately successful struggle against conservatism in its ugliest forms. Moreover, if the situation is not new in Soviet writing neither are the protagonists in the struggle original. Vera Panova in *The Factory* and Danil Granin in *Those Who Seek*, to mention but two

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* The Soviet novel, *Not By Bread Alone*, which recently created a furor in the USSR, describes the unjust jailing of a talented Soviet inventor because he clashed with entrenched interests and outworn conceptions. A torrent of criticism and discussion followed. Dudintsev, the author, was asked to revise his first published version, and the Soviet government has asked publishers in Britain to wait for the revised version before reprinting the book. We asked journalist Ralph Parker, residing in Moscow, to discuss the book's meaning in the Soviet Union today. The novel will appear this month in the USA under the Dutton imprint.—The Editors.

instances, had given Soviet readers characters that embody most of the faults and virtues of Dudintsev's Drozdov and Lopatkin. Why then did the publication of *Not By Bread Alone* (it was serialized in *Novy Mir* which has a circulation of 140,000) create such a sensation among readers? And why as a result did the author incur so violent a storm of criticism, culminating in an editorial reference in *Kommunist?*

Undoubtedly, the circumstances in which *Not By Bread Alone* appeared had a good deal to do both with its popularity and with the criticism levelled against it when the authorities, meekly followed by a group of critics, had analyzed the implications of that popularity. Written in 1955 by an author whose previous two volumes of short stories had won tepid praise, *Not By Bread Alone* after being turned down by one literary magazine, appeared at a time when the Soviet people were reeling under the shock of Khrushchev's revelations about the way their country had been governed during the previous two decades. Their mood defies analysis, for bitterness was compounded with relief, grief with hope, nihilism with a feeling of energies released; but there is one aspect of that complex mood that is peculiarly relevant to the success of Dudintsev's book. This was a feeling of intense indignation at the needless loss —human and material—inflicted on society by Stalin's methods of government. How much happier, how much richer we would have been but for that! How much was wasted! Those were thoughts constantly in people's minds.

The figures of Lopatkin, the lone inventor, and of Drozdov, the heartless, capable, intriguing bureaucrat summarized to the average reader the respective positions in Stalin's Russia occupied by the man of honor and the dishonest opportunist. Because of his uncompromising stand Lopatkin lost everything. His devotion to an idea, which in the circumstances made him the Soviet patriot *in excelsis,* caused him to lose even that minimum of security which men like Busko—his embittered, half-crazy old companion—clung to. He became literally an outlaw, living illegally in Moscow; he was driven to a degree of fanaticism that warped his relations with all who loved him; he was defenseless against the law when his enemies denounced him and—a splendid touch of irony,—experienced the satisfaction of doing a useful job of work only when put on to bridge-building in a Siberian labor camp.

Drozdov, on the other hand, lived safely buttressed by the system. A comfortable home, power, a young wife attracted to him at first by his possession of power and comfort, the satisfaction of work, social recognition—Drozdov typified the "haves" of the Stalin regime.

Is it surprising that *Not By Bread Alone* gained immediate popularity in the fall of last year? How many rank-and-file Soviet citizens did not

recognize that enforced solitude, that feeling of living with only half one's energy, which was the result of fear of one's closest friend, of knowing that any serious challenge to the system—and how can one be an innovator in life without challenging the existing order of things?—was likely to be regarded as an unpatriotic act?

THE WRITER Dudintsev is, I think, himself to blame for a certain misinterpretation of his lone inventor's character, around which much of the more intelligent criticism of the book has turned. Instead of showing that his ascetism, his apparent willingness to accept Busko's philosophy of the "hero and the mob," and, in particular, his somewhat arrogant neglect of those organizations—Party, trade union, Comsomol, to name but three—where a man of his integrity could have found some allies, instead of showing that these traits of character were forced upon his hero by circumstances, the author by sheer ineptitude created an impression that they are *necessary* qualities of the man with a mission in life. In the same way the author needlessly invited criticism by suggesting (it must be said in his defense that the public of 1956 was wide open to this suggestion) that the Drozdovs of the Soviet managerial world are an inevitable product of power. As an engineer participating in the discussion on *Not By Bread Alone* put it: "I looked in this novel for an answer to the question why an intelligent and gifted man like Drozdov became a bureaucrat. . . . After all, he was a worker's son. The author suggests that power itself breeds bureaucratism and that the higher a man rises in the managerial system the more ruthless he is bound to grow. It is obvious, of course, that real Soviet people do not lose their finer qualities as they rise."

The key to the question why *Not By Bread Alone* came under such severe criticism last winter probably lies in the Soviet authorities' anxiety lest the exposure of Drozdov and his ilk create an "anarchistic attitude towards the state apparatus" (the words are *Kommunist's*). Late in 1956 the Soviet leaders appear to have reached the conclusion that there was a dangerous disparity between the growth of a critical spirit in the public and the tempo with which bureaucratic abuses in the administrative and managerial systems could be removed. Their desire to rid the Soviet system of those abuses is unquestionable: their whole program of decentralization, of stimulating local initiative, putting life into the elected Soviets, increasing the powers of trade unions not to mention the revival of the Ministry of State Control as an effective anti-bureaucratic instrument—this speaks for itself. But they are well aware of the magnitude of a task that is rooted not only in Stalinist practices but in Russian history.

In adopting a position where they run the risk of being suspected,

unfairly in my opinion, of defending what Dudintsev was mainly attacking, the Soviet leaders base themselves fair and square on the principle enunciated by Lenin in a letter to M. Sokolov, quoted by *Kommunist* in connection with its criticism that Dudintsev, while actuated by unquestionable honest motives, had allowed himself to be carried away by his enthusiasm for "revelations."

"You write," said Lenin, " 'Spontaneous activity by the masses will be *possible* only if we wipe from the face of the earth that abscess known as bureaucratic central boards and centres'. . . . You cannot 'cut out' an abscess of that kind. You can only heal it. It is absurd, *impossible,* to apply surgical methods in such a case; only slow cure—all the rest is pure charlatanism and naiveté. . . . Cut out the central boards? That's nonsense. What are you going to put in their place? You don't know. You cannot 'cut out,' you must cleanse and heal, heal and cleanse ten, a hundred times. And not lose heart."

In those words, it seems to me, lies the kernel of the Party's attitude to what it considers the shortcomings of *Not By Bread Alone.* In other words, Dudintsev is the victim of the conclusions that the Soviet public might draw from his attack on Drozdovism. This in itself is a striking tribute to the power of his book over a public that more than any other in the world looks to its writers to explain the society they live in and to prompt them to action.

One can only commiserate with an author who with the best intentions but with little literary experience has written a more or less true account of the recent past only to find that a public avid for change is flourishing it as a banner for today.

On the other hand, Vladimir Dudintsev has the satisfaction of knowing that the publication of his novel as no other event in the literary world since the death of Stalin has brought home to the Soviet authorities the necessity of "healing the abscess" with the speediest methods known to political medicine.

Soon after *Not By Bread Alone* was published I had an opportunity of discussing it with a leading Soviet writer at a reception in the Kremlin. The Hungarian events were at their height.

"It is not very good literature." he said, "It may be forgotten as literature in two years time. But it contains a warning. It is a message to our leaders that having taken one step towards curing our society they must take another . . . and another. . . ."

It is the reforms in the legal system, the progressive reduction of bureaucratic powers involved in the changes going on in the managerial set-up, the democratization of Soviet life that we must examine to see whether Dudintsev's lesson has been learned.

THE BIRTH OF REASON

J. D. BERNAL

GREEK thought, for historical reasons, underlies that of later ages, and particularly the theories of modern science, social as well as natural, We cannot think rationally except along the lines the first philosophers laid down for us; most often we think in the very words they first invented. The categories of philosophy and science were indeed fixed in a long debate which lasted to the time of Aristotle. For lack of knowledge, and even more for lack of criticism of their origins, the values and ideals of Plato are still with us. We have long needed a book which in a coherent way would examine how far this mode of thinking is a reflection of the conditions of the class-divided and slave-ridden society of Classical Greece.

To a Marxist these are by no means just far away and long ago events to be studied for their intrinsic interest alone. They are part of the struggle of today and tomorrow. Marx himself wrote his doctoral thesis on the atomic philosophy of Democritus and Epicurus; Engels, notably in *The Origin of the Family*, discusses the social origins of the Greeks. Just because reaction is still able to use ideological weapons forged in defense of privilege in Ancient Greece, there is all the more reason to examine how and why this was done and to show the contrasting ideology which is arising in the making of a classless society.

A pioneer work in this field of investigation is George Thomson's *The First Philosophers*, the second volume in a series which will bear the general title, Studies in Ancient Greek Society.* Writing about the

* International Publishers, $5.50. The first volume, *The Pre-Historic Aegean*, is $10.00. A third volume, on the philosophies of ancient India and China, is in preparation.

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thinkers of the sixth and fifth centuries before Christ, he is laying bare the essential character of Greek thought in relation to the development of society, but for the above-mentioned reasons, he is doing far more than that.

Thomson starts with the beginning of humanity in the tribal world of primitive communism. There he traces, with the help of Pavlovian psychology, the origins of human speech and thought and its differentiation from the animal mode. He shows the essentially co-operative nature of early production linked with the first speech. "Many brains are better than one . . . tools, speech, co-operation—are parts of a single process, the labour of production. The process is distinctively human and its organizing unit is society" (p. 5). There follows an interesting, though far too short, analysis of the forms of language and its basic unit the sentence, reflecting in its parts "the personal activity of the labourer, the subject of his labour, and its instruments" (p. 41).

The next chapter on Tribal Cosmology introduces the key idea of the book, that the early images of the world were derived not from any direct objective experience, but through the medium of the inner structure, particularly the relationship structure, of the tribe itself. Objectivity and abstraction are, as he shows, late developments: the first understanding of the world was sociomorphic:

> . . . the human consciousness was generated within the labor process through the use of tools and speech; and consequently the form in which the earth and its natural products—the subject of his labor—presented themselves to his consciousness was determined by his social relations of production. (p. 46)

That man's picture of the universe should be mirrored on his society is not to say that it was unscientific: science could indeed only come about in this way. It is interesting to reflect that it was Marx's own study of capitalist society that led him to dialectic materialism with implications covering all other aspects of nature. Particularly fascinating is Thomson's account of the fourfold division of the American Indian camp facing the four quarters corresponding to different totem sub-clans; and of its further elaboration among the Zunis, where class divisions are beginning, by adding a centre—the priest king—and two more sections, for heaven above and the underworld below, making in all the sacred seven from which according to Thomson, come the seven planets and the seven days of the week.

THE next section on The Oriental Despotism takes up the story of early class societies. First, not because it is earlier but because it retained

primitive features longer, comes a discussion of ancient China (which no doubt since Thomson's visit there will be much enlarged). The instructive comparison is between Greece and China, the two countries in which philosophy was most developed. (Thomson strangely ignores Persian and Indian philosophy throughout.) There are many parallels, in the elements, in the dualism of Yang and Yin, in the doctrine of the mean. The fundamental difference, which retarded the further development in China, was the conception of the Emperor mediating between earth and heaven, a reflection in ideas of the social reality of a land-owning bureaucracy which held down the merchants and prevented the development of full commodity production.

Returning to the Near East, Thomson is able to show the similar limitation imposed by the existence of priest-kings in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. It was round them and the gods built in their image that the official picture, not only of society but of the whole universe, was built. They served to preserve the appearance of a natural order and to conceal the reality of exploitation and the class splitting of the old tribal society.

> Hence, notwithstanding all that had been achieved in the technique of engineering, architecture, chemistry, astronomy, and mathematics, the ideologists of this epoch were forced to subordinate their knowledge to the notion that the existing structure of society was part of the natural order. The perpetuation of this illusion was the special function of the kingship. (p. 93)

The insistence on divinely ordained harmony became very early a brake on progress, not only in technology but in ideas.

> The ideological superstructure which had been thrown up in the transition from primitive communism to class society ended by becoming a dead weight crushing all further development of the productive forces. And hence, for all their technical achievements—their towers reaching unto heaven and their death-defying pyramids—these Bronze Age societies failed to create anything that might be called philosophy. (p. 93)

Thomson goes on to say that this is the ultimate fate of all class-divided societies, including our own.

> Blind to the reality of his class relations, bewildered by chaotic experience and conflicting facts, man—that is, bourgeois man—seeks for a solution to the mystery, not in science, which has unravelled so many mysteries and made him what he is, but in a 'metaphysical hypothesis', which will somehow, he hopes, bring order out of chaos. And so, although the ziggurats and pyramids are in ruins, the illusion that inspired them is still cherished, most obstinately, even today, although already, among a

> third of the earth's inhabitants, it has been shattered by the working class, which, having recognized man's place in history, is busy reuniting society and transforming nature. (p. 94-95)

Of all the people of the ancient Near East, only the Hebrews managed, on account of their very poverty and exposed position, to avoid kingly subjection.

> . . . the common people of Israel not only preserved their tribal traditions but cherished them with a fierce tenacity as they saw them threatened by economic and social changes arising from trade and war. Their spokesmen were the prophets, who, it has been observed, were 'the inheritors and guardians of that democratic principle which Israel had preserved from nomad days'. (p. 100)

Having shown why the ideas and achievements of the older civilizations were necessarily limited, Thomson passes to his main theme, the origin of philosophy in sixth-century Greece. Many lines of evidence point to the existence of priest-kings in early Greek cities. Thomson here develops a new approach in a scholarly chapter on the early Greek calendar. This was based on lunar months with three extra months added at various times every eight years. He then goes on to show how this is associated with a ritual kingship tenable in the first place only for eight or nine years. Rather amusingly he notes that Hesiod, whose *Works and Days* was a practical farmers' almanac, mentions no calendar months because all cities had different ones, but relies on the stars. Thomson follows Hesiod further in his *Theogony,* or origin of the Gods, to show that it is really a reproduction of the old Babylonian creation myth in which the world is created by tearing father heaven and mother earth apart, a task originally given to their offspring, the young god-king. A more sober version of the same myth is to be found in the first chapter of Genesis.

THE first men whom the Greeks qualified as philosophers or lovers of wisdom, rather than as prophets or seers, flourished in the Ionian city of Miletus some years after 600 B.C. Miletus was at the time a great trading town on the Asiatic mainland, having close connections with Babylon and Egypt, and with many resident foreigners. Thomson indeed shows that Thales, the first of the philosophers, was probably one of a family of priests of Phoenician origin. His achievements are legendary, as all his writings have perished, but tradition has it that he was the first to explain the earth as arising from water and floating on "the waters that are beneath the earth." Anaximander, his successor, gave a much more elaborate picture, but both are essentially the Babylonian creation legend with the gods left out, as Cornford showed many years ago.

Thomson, while accepting this thesis, alters and enlarges its significance by stressing not what the Ionian philosophers took from the Babylonians but how they changed it in form if not in content, and thus made possible a weaning of human thought from ancient myth and the gradual building of objective science. He shows also why this happened, how it reflected the emergence of an independent merchant class and the full expansion of production of commodities for sale.

> The truth of the matter is, not that these ancient Greeks anticipated the results of modern science, but that modern scientists have succeeded in reaffirming certain fundamental but forgotten truths and establishing them securely on the basis of experimental proof. The early Greek philosophers stood near the beginning of class society; the modern bourgeois scientists stand near its end. In the work of Anaximander the mythical cosmogony of primitive communism is in process of being transformed by the 'pure reason' of the new ruling class, but with its dialectical content still unimpaired; in the work of Kant, and still more of Hegel, the new dialectical content, immeasurably richer than the old, is on the point of bursting the bonds imposed on it by the 'pure reason' of bourgeois society. The primitive dialectics of these early Greek materialists stands to the dialectical materialism of the present day in the same relation as primitive communism stands to modern communism. (p. 162)

In his next section Thomson sketches in the economic and political development of the new merchant republics which came into power towards the end of the sixth century in Greek cities all over the Mediterranean. This was to be the background of the further development of philosophic thought. He begins with Engels' definition of civilization as:

> . . . the stage of development in society at which the division of labour, the exchange between individuals arising from it, and the commodity production which combines them both, come to their full growth and revolutionize the whole of previous society.

Although he is undoubtedly right that one stage of this revolution, the formation of a merchant-dominant slave society, only occurred in the Greek cities—it was notably absent in Egypt, India or China—I feel he treats the definition too rigidly, so as to deny the term to the beginning of the process where in the cities, and only in the cities, of the Ancient East, class differentiation and commodity production first started.

Thomson analyses the economic basis of the Iron Age city state, Phoenician, Greek, the growth of trade, the increasing dependence on slavery. His discussion of ancient slavery, backed by a wealth of examples, is one

of the most telling of the book and disposes of the apologists for the Greeks who always play it down.

He next describes the political revolution which destroyed the power of the land-owning nobles who first ruled the cities. This usually took place in two stages: first the seizure of power by a big merchant boss or *tyrant* who put down the landowners and ruled with the support of the merchants and free artisans. When he failed to win that support or there was economic trouble, a further revolution led to republics of free citizens in which the merchants had the leading part, but where the poorer citizens, especially in Athens, made their voice heard.

THE fatal weakness of Athenian democracy, seen already by its founder Solon, was its lack of social justice. Though there was equality before the law—*isonomia*—there was no equality of property—*isomoiria*—and no limit to the acquisition of wealth and slaves. The ideology that went with these economic and political changes was as diverse as the classes themselves. The merchants accepted the modified traditional picture presented by the Ionian philosophy; the poorer citizens found their beliefs in the various forms of Orphism, a mystery religion drawn from the tribal tradition of initiation but embodying ideas of justice, love and redemption. Here in the awareness of the ever-present alternatives of freedom and slavery, Thomson sees the origin of the Heaven and Hell dualism of later philosophy and religion.

He now returns to the world of thought and begins with Pythagoras, the philosopher, mystic and politician of the Greek colonies in south Italy, who founded a school there that had lasting influence. The great contribution of the Pythagoreans was their introduction of the idea of number as the underlying reality of the universe. According to Thomson:

> What led them to take this step? Not simply their interest in mathematics. Rather, their interest in mathematics was only another manifestation of the same tendency. So fundamental a development in thought can only be explained if it is seen as the conscious reflection of a movement equally fundamental in the social relations of their time. What was new in ancient Greek society? This question has been answered in the preceding chapters. It was precisely in Greece of this period that commodity production came to its full growth and revolutionized the whole of previous society. Anaximentes and Pythagoras both reveal the characteristic outlook of the new merchant class, which was engaged in the exchange of commodities on a scale which appears very small by our standard but was unprecedented by theirs. The basic factor, therefore, was the growth of a society organized for the production of exchange values and the consequent decay of the old relations based on the production of use values. (p. 263)

Number links the physical and the social world through the idea of harmony. It was one of the first scientific discoveries that the lengths of the four fixed strings of a lyre were in the ratio of 6:8:9:12, the two intermediates being the *arithmetic mean* $9 = \frac{1}{2}(6 + 12)$ and the *harmonic mean* $\frac{1}{8} = \frac{1}{2}(1/6 + 1/12)$, the *mean* of the extreme octave. Pythagoras used it to support the policy of, in civic harmony, a co-ordination of opposites, a reconciliation of dissentients.

This compromising philosophy was found insufficient in the disturbed period of the Persian wars at the beginning of the fifth century. Herakleitos of Ephesus put forward strife between opposites as the moving force in a changing, rather than a balanced, world with fire as its basic element, but:

> His opposites are not noblemen and commoners but freemen and slaves. This is clear from his own words: 'War is father of all and lord of all, and has made gods and men, freemen and slaves.' For him, therefore, strife is absolute, unity relative. This is true dialectics. (p. 272)

Herakleitos wrote in a series of memorable phrases full of acknowledged internal contradictions; he relies on observation and analysis but realizes its difficulties. "Nature loves to hide itself. If you do not expect the unexpected you will not find it." Thomson compares him with the dramatist Sophocles and brings out the dialectic of the tragedy of Oedipus. A contrary view and one that was to have a decisive effect on philosophy was that of Parmenides. Here, in defense of the established order, it is argued that no change is possible. If change appears it is only illusory. The universe is *one* eternal *being*. This, according to Thomson, is a further step towards abstraction "which signalizes the emergence of what was new and developing in ancient thought—the moment at which the ideological fetters of primitive society were finally swept away."

The Parmenidean One is the first idea of *substance;* it is a reflection in philosophy of exchange value in the economy of the Greek republics.

WITH Parmenides, according to Thomson, primitive thought was left behind and philosophy was free to abandon science and enter into the realm of pure reason. The separation of science and philosophy is brought out in a history of medical thought. In the fifth century the Greeks were "cleverer and freer from silly nonsense" than other people, as Herodotus put it. To Hippocrates, medicine was an art—"techne"—to be learned like any other trade by observation and good practice. Abstract theory was rejected, but with time it crept in, and with its doctrine of hot and cold, dry and wet, and its four humors, inspired by the philosophers, it paralyzed medical thinking right up to a hundred years ago. As an example of science, medicine is not a happy choice, for Greek medicine was in fact

never in a position to be really scientific; physics, chemistry and biology needed to be founded first. Nevertheless its history serves to show even more than Thomson claims, that Philosophy did not so much desert Science as cripple it.

In the last part of the book Thomson discusses briefly and brilliantly the contribution of the atomists, Democritus and Epicurus. He agrees with Farrington that it "marks the culmination in antiquity of the movement of rational speculation begun by Thales." But he goes on to say that it was speculation rather than science, and though materialistic it was a passive materialism, turning away from the world and not towards it. In his view Aristotle who, from all his idealism, did turn towards the world, lies more in the line of progress.

There remains the question of subjective dialectics where the emphasis changed from questions about the universe itself to questions as to how we can *know* anything about it. This search was to create the *dialectics*, or art of discussion, an attempt to arrive at the truth by eliminating contradictions, leading not to science but to grammar and logic. Its climax was to be the idealism of Plato. In such discussions agreement indeed can be reached, for

> Thanks to our common humanity, including speech, which enables us to exchange our experiences, we have a large measure of common ground. Thus, knowledge is a *social* product. (p. 317)

The underlying explanation for this development of thought Thomson sees in the productive relations.

> The power of abstraction embodied in the Platonic theory of Ideas and in Aristotelian logic was an intellectual product of the social relations created by the abstract process of commodity exchange. In saying that the rules of logic are socially determined, we do not impugn their objective truth, but, on the contrary, affirm it; for truth is a social product. (p. 321).

In the summing up in the last chapter, Thomson further elaborates these ideas.

> Such metaphysical views of the world are indeed a reflection of reality; but the reality which they reflect is not simply, as it purports to be, the world of nature; it embodies also the class structure of society, as seen by the ruling class, which cannot maintain itself without fostering the illusion that its power is a product, not of history, but of nature. And yet, since the social relations, from which these illusions spring, are constantly changing and developing in response to developments in the productive forces, so all the intellectual products of class society also

> change and develop, driven forward by their internal contradictions. This is the secret historical logic which, unknown to the debaters, presided over the 'prolonged symposium' of Greek philosophy. (p. 340)

This was not and could not be the way in which philosophy appeared to those who were making it. They were imbued with "socially necessary false consciousness" which disguised the economic realities in the guise of "pure reason," an illusion which in various forms has haunted all class-divided societies and which persists to this day. The ruling class can indeed not face any serious analysis of society for fear that their own privileged position would be destroyed. The flight to idealism is only the extreme case of not even being able to look at the external world. But the illusions of class society can and are being removed through the action of the workers determined to build here and now in this world the new civilization that their labor and knowledge has made possible. This is the burden of knowledge.

> So long as man is ignorant of the laws which govern his existence, he is their slave, and they appear to him as the will of a superior being; but, in so far as he understands them, he can master them and make them serve his will. (p. 347)
>
> The life process of society, which is based on the process of material production, does not strip off its mystical veil until it is treated as production by freely associated men and is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a common plan. (p. 347)—Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, p. 51)

I hope I have written enough to give something of the scope and quality of this great book. It is written to provoke thought and it does provoke it. Not only the first philosophers but philosophy itself can never seem the same to anyone who has read it. But if it demands consideration it is also certain to produce controversy. It has been, and will certainly be, attacked by classical dons for whom Plato and Aristotle still have a part to play in resisting social change. But even the more liberal will find some of the formulations difficult to accept at first reading. Marxists will agree with the fundamental rightness of the equating of philosophical abstraction and the abstract character of commodity exchange and money. But to prove that equation it seems to me that more needs to be done to link the ideological superstructure with the production relations. The intermediate terms of politics need more stressing if the non-Marxist is to be helped to understand the effect of social factors on thought.

A more serious defect, to my thinking, is the virtual neglect of Greek science, save for a short note on medicine, and the complete absence of discussion of technique and of the contribution of the Greek workers to the evolution of philosophy and science. Thomson criticizes (p. 171)

Farrington's contention that it was essentially technique that differentiated the Milesian philosophers from those of the older cultures. However, in rejecting the influence of technique altogether I feel he goes too far. There is plenty of evidence in Greek pottery, statues, and architecture, of something more than primitive fidelity to nature. It was rather the expression of a sense of order that had at least as much to do with Greek philosophy and science as had the poetry and drama of which Thomson writes so convincingly. Certainly the predilection of the Greeks for plane and solid geometry and for the use of the compass comes from the practice of the stoneworkers, as Stanley Casson has shown in *The Technique of Early Greek Sculpture.*

Greek science had not, and could not have for reasons determined by objective nature, any large field of utility. Neither chemistry nor biology could be open to it. Before that could be done the tools had to be made and the facts collected, and this was itself a consequence of economic factors in Islamic and Renaissance times. But where science could be used, in mechanics and astronomy, it certainly was. In this volume Greek astronomy is hardly mentioned; let us hope it will be discussed in subsequent volumes with the same interpretative brilliance. For the lack of it, however, the relation of Greek philosophy to modern science is obscured. It is true, as Thomson says (see quotation on page), that modern science has reaffirmed forgotten truths first guessed at by the Greeks. But this is only part of the story. Those truths would never have been reaffirmed, never indeed examined, but for the form in which their first statement was made, a form clear enough to be grasped, tested, rejected and improved upon. The Greeks were supreme as model builders. Even if the models came from clan organization they are the linear ancestors of our modern scientific concepts. The atom of today is not a rediscovery, it is the original Democritan atom, hard, massy, impenetrable, that was recovered by Gassendi and passed through Newton to Rutherford.

It should be the subject of another book to judge whether it was through science or through philosophy that the Greeks contributed most to later civilization. However that may be, there is no question that philosophy did exert, and is still exerting, an enormous influence for good and ill, and that to understand it we need to know its origins. That is why this book in which Thomson has so brilliantly analyzed the first philosophers in their social setting is a work that is useful now and will become a permanent addition to the literature of Marxism.

Note to Readers

We are pleased to welcome to our Board of Contributors, the West Coast writer and former editor of the California Quarterly, Philip Stevenson.

FOUR POETS

ON READING THE OXFORD BOOK OF ENGLISH VERSE

Flowers are lovely and death is sad
A bird sings almost as sweetly as I
Kings are noble and love is glad
God is nigh

God is nigh but not alone
Other gods usurp His throne
The gods of Greek mythology
Are very much like you and me

Like you and me they revel in
The beauty of the commonplace
Stella's sighs
Mary's eyes
A day in June
A state of grace
Like you and me they wear
The old school tie

Thus the ethereal heirs of the Greeks
Silent upon their imperial peaks.

PAUL JARRICO

THE FIFTH SEASON

Snows of tomorrow shall not melt,
They are the salt of our green day.
For little more than what we have
In one another's arms we pray.

Alive, alive to every world
Lost in the stranger's hungry tear,
The forest of the heart we range
To touch the hot horns of the deer.

Exile in your coat of thorn,
Prisoner in your cage of bone,
Our joy shall mark your field of rage,
Your icy solitude our home

Where in each other's arms we pray
For little more than what we have,
Sure of the world's return and of
The stranger flowering on his grave

In that fifth season when the snow
Flares in an ecstasy of change
And from the hot horns of the deer
Grows the green forest where we range.

CHARLES HUMBOLDT

SYMBOL

A table stands on four square legs
    and foursquare, solid,
It's something to rest the elbows on
And break bread with friends
    or strangers—don't I know it!
    and isn't it grand!
The families, too, gather around
    to hash things out or peel
    an orange or total up expenses
    for the month.
And I'd like to have a nickel
    for every page of copybook
    turned beneath the shaded lamp
    and I wish I had a dime

for every domino fished out
of the boneyard,
But that's too much to ask.
I thought of settling for the table
itself, a sort of symbol,
Until I realized that everybody
hasn't got a table,
Just as simple as that.

MARIO CASETTA

BURDENS

When I was young and strong and straight
No burdens on my back were laid,
So proud I took on me the weight
Of all the wrongs I never made.

It forced my knees down to the ground
And bent my back with bowed despair,
But when I took it off I found
I could no longer lightly fare;

For even as I said farewell,
Leaving the world's woes on the world's shelf
There grew upon me like a shell
The heavier burden of myself.

FRED COGSWELL

MONOPOLY IS NOT A GAME

VICTOR PERLO

EARLY in the century, the chronicler of the trusts, John Moody, wrote that the Rockefellers and the Morgans "are the only distinctively great interests that dominate immense areas in all lines, steam transportation, public service, industrial, financial, banking, insurance, and so forth."

Such descriptions of the super-empires of finance capital, or "interest groups," were prominent in the anti-monopoly literature of America through the 1930's. Outstanding in that decade were Anna Rochester's *Rulers of America,* written from the Marxist viewpoint; and the National Resources Committee's *Structure of the American Economy,* one of the excellent studies which was as far as the New Deal could get in effectuating its anti-monopoly slogans.

If recent apologists for the present social system have tried to disguise its true nature with elaborate argument and fanciful propaganda, they have attempted to dispose of this monopolist aspect mainly by smothering it. One can go through the post-war economic texts, and the popular books on economics, and find the monopoly interest groups either ignored or dismissed in a passing comment as a "bogeymen set up by demagogues" (Berle).

On the Left, reflecting perhaps the influence of apologetic propaganda, some questions have been raised concerning the validity of the concept of dominant monopoly power. Thus particular attention has been paid to the development of groups outside of the old Wall Street centers —notably Chicago, Texas, and California.*

This article considers certain questions of topical interest about them: 1. Do the dominant monopoly interests still exist? 2. Which is the most powerful today? 3. Do the regional groups represent a real challenge for

* A major part of my new book, the *Empire of High Finance,* to be published in June 1957 by International Publishers, is an analysis of these financial groups as they shape up today.

dominance to the Wall Street centers? 4. Are there serious policy differences among them, especially in the crucial areas of foreign affairs, war and peace?

Two lines of argument are followed by those who would abolish the concept of powerful financial interest groups. One concerns the alleged diffusion of financial power among hundreds of independent, self-contained corporations. This is the basic attack against Lenin's thesis of the merging of financial and industrial capital, and the formation of a ruling financial oligarchy (this is discussed in my article "The Power of the Financiers" included in the anniversary volume of International Publishers, "Looking Forward"). And it is examined in detail in Part A of *The Empire of High Finance.* Suffice it to say here that the dependence of industrial monopolies on great banks and insurance companies for outside financing is still decisive; that the joint ownership and control of financial and industrial monopolies has increased markedly; and that the network of interlocking directorates which personifies the common control is essentially intact.

The second argument goes to the other extreme, and assumes the merging of capitals carried to the point where lines of demarcation are obliterated, and a single, wholly unified oligarchy runs everything. This is a sort of domestic version of Karl Kautsky's theory of "ultra-imperialism," whereby all of the great colonial powers would merge into a single giant that would peacefully rule the world. True, in most leading corporations each of the major interest groups have at least a minimum investment. But analysis shows that particular groups continue to concentrate their holdings in companies they can control; and in *The Empire of High Finance* the number of corporate giants identified as falling within *particular* interest groups is larger than in any previous study.

THE LINES of demarcation between the interest groups cannot be as distinct as in the case of individual corporations, which have a defined legal entity. Yet realistically, the particular empires and subordinate financial duchies have approximate definition. The ruling families and cliques of the Rockefeller and Morgan groups, for example, know very well which companies are *theirs,* and in which they have a certain division of power with the other, or with some third interest group. The boundaries are not fixed. There is a continual jockeying for position, an undercover contest for control of various corporations, sometimes culminating in a change in control, open or secret, reached by peaceful agreement or by the financial warfare of the lawsuit and the proxy contest. Old alliances are weakened, while new ones arise. New power cen-

ters come to the fore, while some old ones dwindle, and tend to be absorbed by larger groups.

The *Empire of High Finance* identifies eight major interest groups, each controlling assorted corporations with total assets of more than $10 billion, and together controlling at least $220 billion of assets. Five of them are centered in the east, essentially in Wall Street. The other three are outlying regional groups.

The eight interest groups combined have increased their share of total profits and their influence in the economy generally, as part of the process of economic concentration. However, there have been significant differences in the growth rates of particular groups. Two of the groups considered major in the pre-war study, *Structure of the American Economy,* no longer are in the top ranks (Kuhn Loeb and Boston). Two others must be added (First National City Bank and Bank of America).

During the 60-years history of the rise of imperialism (monopoly) in the United States, the Morgan and Rockefeller groups have increased their overall weight at the very apex of monopoly power. Today each controls corporations with assets of over $60 billion. Through the scope of their financial institutions and connections, one or both exert a significant degree of influence on most lesser empires, and on the majority of large corporations. They continue to lead in the formation of general financial policies of Wall Street, and in the practical control of the affairs of state.

Working together in some respects, these groups are rivals in others. For almost forty years, beginning during the period 1905-10, the Morgan interests were in the ascendancy. The "corner of Broad and Wall" was *the* financial capital of America.

That has changed significantly in post-war years. The wealth and profits of the Rockefellers have grown more rapidly, as has their influence in financial and political affairs. Now an approximate parity of power exists between the two groups. Some recent exploits of the Rockefeller group are well known. Even the casual newspaper reader knows how their Standard Oil companies have taken over much of the liquid capital in areas once monopolized by British imperialism. The doings of the Rockefeller Brothers in the Chase Manhattan Bank, in aircraft, nucleonics and chemicals, in New York, Washington, Arkansas, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and Japan, as well as their manifold tax-deductible charities are all given the most dazzling publicity.

As for the Morgans, they have attempted in this period to give the appearance of non-existence—and not a few have been taken in. According to their own version, and some of the nostalgic commentaries on

their past glories, J. P. Morgan & Co. is now just another commercial bank, and not one of the largest. Strange that this "ordinary bank," in 1955, held interlocking directorates with industrial corporations having more assets than the industrial interlocks of any other bank in the country! Or that the investment banking house of Morgan Stanley & Co., only nominally independent of the commercial bank, still manages most of the extra-large stock and bond flotations.

The Morgan group is still a reality: a clique of wealthy U.S. and overseas investors, with combined private fortunes totalling many, many, billions of dollars, and controlling a network of financially linked banks, insurance companies, utilities, and industrial enterprises second to none.

BUT THE relative power of the Morgan group has declined. A number of major corporations have passed from its exclusive control, while the Rockefellers have taken over new domains. Between 1929 and 1955, the profits of such Morgan standbys as U.S. Steel and General Electric increased 2-1/3 times; while those of the Standard Oil companies increased 4½ times. The economic root-cause of that change in the power balance lies in the supplanting of steel by oil as the greatest industry of capitalism. Between 1901 and 1953 production of steel increased 7½ times, while domestic production of oil increased 34 times. And foreign investments of oil companies have jumped to the point where they almost equal those for all manufacturing industries combined.

A number of factors accelerated the process, and brought it to a decisive point during the 1945-1955 post-war decade. The Rockefellers won major financial allies—the Mellons and the Boston group (First National Bank)—away from the Morgans. Especially important in this period of state monopoly capitalism, the Rockefellers gained the leading role in the political machinery of the Republican Party and the Eisenhower Administration, while the Morgan group was temporarily weakened by the New Deal, which forced certain changes in the forms of monopoly organization disadvantageous to Morgan interests. Foreign clients of the Morgans had to sell American stockholdings during World War II. And one cannot overlook the influence of that crude but fabulous racket—the 27% oil depletion allowance—in this epoch of high taxes.

Turning from these two dominant groups, we note that three regional groups have received particular attention since World War II, largely for political reasons. The Chicago group was associated with the Taft wing of the Republican Party and the phenomenon known as midwest isolationism.

The Chicago financier-industrialists control corporations with assets of

over $20 billion, including two of the ten largest banks, and nine of the hundred largest non-financial corporations. A factor to be reckoned with in the economy of the country, this group is dependent on the more powerful Wall Street centers in some respects, and is comparatively weak in control of basic industry.

Contrary to some opinions, the Chicago group corporations have very substantial foreign investments, and participate actively in foreign trade, although their banks lack adequate international financial ties. The "isolationist" line of the Chicago Tribune and the Taft Republicans was geared to certain political traditions of the midwest. But there is no sharply defined economic interest motivation for it, and certainly no basis for concluding that the Chicago monopolies are "less imperialist" than Wall Street. Following the routing of the Taft forces in the Republican Party in 1952, this political trend has dwindled in influence, and the Chicago financiers have indeed been "isolated" from the main positions of power in Washington.

The other group, the Texas oil millionaires have thrown their weight around in recent years, and boasted aplenty of their tax-free revenues. They also have spent considerable sums for the most reactionary figures in the political scene, notably McCarthy. Various theories were advanced to account for the free-wheeling Texans. There was the economic explanation that they were fighting Wall Street for a place in the sun, and the psychological explanation that they were *nouveaux riches* miffed because of non-acceptance by the eastern aristocracy. These theories may have elements of validity, but they start from exaggerated assumptions concerning the importance of the wealthy Texans.

An interesting survey by *Fortune* of the businessmen and McCarthy showed (a) that not all Texas oil millionaires were McCarthyites, and (b) that McCarthy supporters came from all parts of the country, and included quite a few men who swing more weight in economic affairs than the Texans. The total election spending by Texas millionaires is a fraction of the tens of millions laid out each four years by the leading Wall Street groups, who really dominate the political apparatus.

A few Texas oil men are wealthy. But neither singly nor collectively do they constitute a real center of economic power. At least half the oil of Texas is owned by the giant oil combines of the Rockefellers, Mellons, et al. The refining, transport, and distribution of oil is almost wholly in Wall Street hands. In the words of Harvey O'Connor, the state is ultimately controlled by giant "oil corporations which consider Texas almost on a par with Venezuela and Arabia as a province for their enrichment."

The newly-rich oil millionaires have a stronger resemblance to the compradore generals and Kings of these overseas possessions than to genuine rivals of Eastern interests. A pertinent subject for investigation would be the role of Standard Oil in stimulating the interests of some Texas oilmen in McCarthy and company.

MOST INTERESTING of all the regions economically is California, the fastest growing section of the country. This war-boomed state is the main base of the aircraft industry, which during 1956 passed the automobile industry as the largest employer of manufacturing labor in the country. With a growing locally-owned basic industry, and the largest bank in the country, California certainly cannot be regarded as an economic colony of Wall Street, although Wall Street companies still own a large part of it. With Nixon standing in the wings, and Knowland, the Senator from "Formosa," a Republican Senate leader, one can see that the wealthy men of this populous state must now be reckoned with in political affairs.

Actually there are three California groups or grouplets. One centers around the old San Francisco banks. It is important in California food and lumber industries, and dominates the economy of Hawaii. Knowland's main connections are with this group. A second group consists of Los Angeles oil and aircraft men and allied local interests. These are Nixon's original backers. Both of these are of secondary rank, and to a considerable extent dependent on Wall Street financial institutions.

The most important group in California is that around the $10 billion Bank of America, which, with the commonly-owned Transamerica Corp., has an unparalleled monopoly position in the Far West. The Kaiser heavy industry enterprises are associated with this bank. And it has rapidly risen to become one of the leading U.S. banks overseas, especially in the Far East. Giannini and his Bank of America achieved their mushroom expansion largely in conflict with Wall Street interests. And in a number of respects this group varies from the customary pattern of present-day high finance. Today it is one of the eight major interest groups in the country. Historically, its national political connections have been with the Democrats more than the Republicans, and it does not appear to have close associations with the Knowland or Nixon machines.

To understand the political role of a Knowland and a Nixon, one cannot stop with the specific interests of their local backers. It is also necessary to examine the concrete political-economic ties between these grouplets and particular Wall Street groups. This is a most complex task, to which political scientists might well turn their attention. Here are a

few of the unanswered questions and tentative hypotheses:

Is Knowland's championship of Chiang-Kai-Shek solely a blend of political opportunism and the desire of his local backers to convert Formosa into another Hawaii? Or does he speak for more powerful interests, possibly those Wall Street groups with which the old San Francisco banks have the closest ties?

Nixon, it is known, was selected for the vice-presidency from among a number of possible candidates by the Dewey-Aldrich machine running the Republican Party. Standard Oil has a special place in that machine, as it and its ally Gulf Oil have in the oil industry of Southern California. The implication is that the succession of Nixon to the Presidency would not challenge, but might even strengthen, the present leading role of the oil cartel within the Wall Street oligarchy managing affairs in Washington.

ARMAMENTS and foreign investments—these are the special features of the prolonged postwar boom which has brought such unprecedented profits to American big business. The importance of arms contracts is widely appreciated. Recently published material shows that foreign investments play a much bigger role than most people realize—indeed, they compare with armaments as a source of profits. Suffice it to say that U.S. foreign investments are estimated to equal the combined annual national incomes of Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. Without going into further detail, let us note that approximately half of all the profits of America's very large corporations derive from arms orders or foreign investments. That is why profits have gone so far beyond all previously recorded norms. And it suggests that Stalin's famous formulation of "The Law of Maximum Profits" deserves careful attention.

All major groups of the financial oligarchy participate in these kinds of extra-special profits. But their distribution is very uneven. The place of oil in foreign investments has grown amazingly. By 1955 over one-half of all the income reported by corporations from foreign investments was oil company income. The Rockefeller and Mellon groups, therefore, have the decisive stake in modern colonialism, as they do in the several political crises which have involved oil so intimately during postwar years (Iran, Venezuela, the entire Middle East, etc.).

They have a corresponding position in the conduct of the foreign affairs of the United States government. Consider John Foster Dulles, whose law firm represents Standard Oil and who has other close Rockefeller ties; or his brother, Allen Dulles the head of the Central Intelligence Agency; or the Rockefellers' financial adviser, Lewis Strauss, at the head

of the Atomic Energy Commission; or Chase Bank man Black running the World Bank; or Standard Oil heir Whitney succeeding Rockefeller-in-law Aldrich as Ambassador to Great Britain. Not to mention the recent top foreign policy job of Nelson Rockefeller. These are all strategic posts of policy and power.

Prominent industrialists, from Henry Ford to General Electric spokesmen have urged the reopening of East-West trade. And even some members of the Cabinet (Wilson and Humphrey) sound occasionally as if they are less than enthusiastic about pressing the policy of heightening international tension. (I do not suggest that these men are consistent advocates of massive disarmament, or of really friendly coexistence between socialist and capitalist lands). But why are there no real concessions in Washington to the particular, more pacific, tendencies they sometimes advocate?

The answer may lie in the balance of foreign interest and foreign policy influence outlined above. One can search far, and not find a Rockefeller or Standard Oil man having anything good to say for East-West trade, or peace, or disarmament; and one can find plenty of contrary statements and activities, of which not the least is the Standard Oil management of Radio Free Europe.

These interests appear to be the most aggressive of the *main* driving forces behind a policy of steadily rising arms spending at home and brinks-of-war abroad. The atom-rattlers of the extreme right-wing of the Republican Party surpass them verbally, but are unable to play an independent role. Objectively they serve as "advance guards" loosing trial balloons for reactionary steps in foreign affairs.

Let me repeat, I am not picturing a division between aggressive and non-aggressive groups of finance capital. One can hardly call the December speech of Henry C. Alexander, Chairman of J. P. Morgan & Co., pacific—demands for more armaments, fire and brimstone against Egypt and the devil with the United Nations. But the facts suggest a definite leading group in the generally aggressive drive of U. S. finance capital. And there are evidences of inner conflicts and cross-tendencies within some of the groups other than those of the oil tycoons.

What does it matter? It matters now to help focus on the enemy more sharply. When Senators O'Mahoney and Kefauver recently put the finger on the oil trusts in condemning the Administration's Middle Eastern policy, they were performing a real public service. This in particular, and the worldwide plunder by dollar imperialism in general, deserve much more attention from the American Left than they have received in recent years. Too many have been comforted by fairytales about the "anti-

colonialism" of the U.S. government, at the very time when it has sponsored the building of that world empire of Wall Street, which already puts the former British colonial properties into the minor leagues. International solidarity is a good slogan, and it should begin with the victims of "our own" corporations.

And it will matter more later, when a principled opposition based on working class and other anti-monopoly interests obtains real scope in the United States. Then the divisions within big business on East-West trade, the level of armaments, etc., can provide the margin to put the movement over the top and win definite concessions for peace.

THE HOWARD FAST DISCUSSION

Jack Lindsay

London

THE DISTANCES we have traversed this last year seem to me summed up in the fact that I find it necessary to explain the reasons why I don't cease to be a Communist. The whole question of conscience I felt sharply raised afresh on reading Howard Fast's essay "My Decision," in the March *Mainstream*. What I am writing here is in a sense a reply to it, but not a combative retort; rather the continuing of a conversation.

To the emotions that stir Fast I have only a comradely salute. Anyone who does not feel in general the same sort of thing is outside the argument. We all know those who remark, "Very sad and bad. Well, that's agreed and settled, now let's get on to the next business, something practical." Such are self-condemned; they have felt nothing. But after we have looked the worst in the eye we have still to make some sense out of life or give up the ghost. I think we can make sense in a slightly different way than Fast has.

We can now begin, I think, to grasp concretely what happened in Russia, why and how it happened. (How remote the Soviets still are from our conceptions of democracy was well brought out in a recent article in *The Anglo-Soviet Journal*: a Soviet defender of the one-candidate election, pushed into a corner, argued (a) if there were more than one candidate, the people would be misled by demagogues etc. (b) only the fellow-bureaucrats were in a position to know the qualities of the various names considered. How Victorian Tories would have cheered!) An historical comprehension is necessary; otherwise an unhealed emotional bitterness remains. But such a comprehension, however much it explains, does not excuse the bad things; and it is in fact obstructive unless directed towards seeing that such things are ended and given no chance to re-sprout. We can weather a lot of shocks indeed, if we feel that a sustained and effective effort is being made to remedy evils and prevent recurrences; we lose heart only if we see no such effort.

Mainstream's editors in their "Comment" pointed to many ways in which amends have been made and forward movements commenced. All that is true, and more might yet be said on the same lines. But I do not think we can meet Fast's case simply in that way. For me as a Marxist the main shock of the 1956 events lay, not simply in the revelation that many horrible and inhuman things had happened and were still happening in the name of socialism, but rather in

the exposure of the abysmal failure of Marxist consciousness, of the unity of theory and practice, which had made the crimes possible. Unless we are confident that the failure in Marxism has been understood and grappled with, we cannot feel any assurance that "such things cannot happen again." And indeed the fact that after the 20th Congress there could still remain so much that was reprehensible in Soviet foreign relations, brought dramatically out by the events in Poland and Hungary, was the plain underlining of this point.

In a sense one knows now only too well that things could not have been otherwise. The bureaucratic distortion of socialism, which was the dark side of Stalinism, reduced Marxism to a brutish dialectics concerned only with the head-on collision of opposites and thus drained humanism from socialist practice. Marxism was the first victim, as it must be in a socialist society which in any serious way takes a wrong turning. (I am putting these points crudely; a more balanced working-out will be found in Maurice Cornforth's essay in the last issue of *The Marxist Quarterly*, in which he briefly but clearly shows how Stalinism went wrong on the conceptions of intensified class-struggle inside socialist society, of increasing "war-inevitability" from imperialism as socialism triumphed, of hardening state-forms.) The problem of reviving Marxism is perhaps the most difficult problem that the U.S.S.R. faces today; for the scholastic rationalizations, the vulgarized Zhdanovist forms, which supplanted Marxism, will need a lot of shifting, and so far have only shown signs of strain, not of disappearance.

IN SUCH a situation, the denunciation of the dark side of Stalinism could only be made in shallow non-Marxist terms. The phrase "cult of the individual" is so grotesque as an explanation of the distortions that one is at a loss to characterize it. We have always satirized bourgeois thought for picking out subjective or peripheral aspects of a phenomenon as the cause of it; and here we have that evasive futility in a sort of parodied form. But the issues it raises are too serious to provoke a laugh. It crystallizes all that one feels and sees of the breakdown of Marxism.

Not that the weaknesses it reveals are solely the property of the U.S.S.R. In all communist parties the epoch through which we have passed has left its dangerous marks. In Britain we have continued, I think I may claim, to build up a body of Marxist thought that is not to be despised; but at the same time one can see, in the sharpened light of the new focus, how many of the rigid and mechanist aspects of the later Stalinist attitudes have impeded, limited and distorted various elements of our thinking, our policy. And the job of changing all this, of releasing in its full dynamic purity the Marxist method—with all that implies in thought and action—is not going to be an easy one, in Britain or anywhere else.

Here, however, is the point at which I break with the formulations of Fast. Even if things were worse, I should still have faith in Marxism and in the people; and however many discontents I had with the existing forms and expressions of my party, I should still believe that it was needed, that it must grow, throw off its backward-looking restraints and distortions, and get in step with the people, at the same time helping to quicken the pace of the movement into a full freedom and happiness. I should still believe that there can, and will, and must be a

harmony recreated between the struggle of the people for a fuller life and the development of Marxism as the science of the life-process. For good and bad, the fates of Marxism and of the Communist Parties are entwined. (I do not mean that contributions cannot be made by non-party individuals, but that the coherent drive of the party cannot be dispensed with.) I for one cannot see except in a day-dream the advent of new parties with the pure milk of Marxism or with some sufficient surrogate; and without Marxism I cannot see the world stably advancing.

By Marxism I mean the consciousness of method, of reality, which is necessary for the creation of a world-society, for human unity—the philosophy which has been historically founded by Marx, Engels and Lenin, and decisively developed by them, however many limitations there may be in their work with its historically conditioned aims, questions, and answers.

Therefore, however personally shattered, I cannot separate my existence, the very integument of my personality, from the life of the Communist Parties, from the life of Marxism in both its national and international aspects. We need, all of us, to think out afresh the situation in which we find ourselves, the nature of capitalist crisis, the changes going on in the socialist sector which has emerged as an unshakable world-factor, and in the capitalist sector that faces such a development. I for one consider that the forms of social change which we shall see will have very little analogy in past forms; and that the ways in which highly advanced industrialist countries are going to move forward are ways we have not foreseen and have still very little understanding of. But in such a difficult and obscure moment, Marxism is not proved unnecessary. The dead forms may give scanty help; all the more need to revive the living method again.

THERE are many points I could make in this relation. I will touch only on what seems to me the essential one. Marxism, with its struggle for the unity of theory and practice is in essence a way of thinking which implies a world-society of brotherhood and peace and plenty. Because of this, it becomes the instrument for making such a world possible, bringing it about. At every step then before the attainment of such a society, it has to fight like grim death to save itself from being swallowed up, distorted, broken down by the world of halfmen, self-divided men, which it seeks to transform. It keeps before itself the idea, the dream, of human unity, and redeems this from abstraction by the ceaseless struggle to actualize it. There is thus the contradiction all the while that Marxism with its concept of the unity of the life-process is striving to affirm itself in a world where that process has been fissured, cracked, distorted and inverted in endless ways; its ideal of the all-round man, the whole man, cannot be realized in such a situation and yet Marxists must seek to act and think as such a man. To bring about the stable and universal development of the all-round man, we need the ending of commodity-production; for as Marx pointed out as one of his basic ideas, while commodity-production remains, commodity-fetichism also remains, the ceaseless pressure to reduce men to things. We may now add, in view of the new focus, the new actual experience of the problems of socialism, that commodity-production in its spiritual effects would not be automatically ended even by an achievement of

plenty. *The division of labor* is an essential aspect of the divisive thingifying process; and the ending of commodity-production in the sense of bringing about communist production must involve the ending of the division of labor and the universal appearance of the all-round man, the whole man. With the advent of automation, atomic energy and the rest of it, we can now visualize such a development without utopian fantasy.

What is our job meanwhile? To struggle for socialism on the political and economic fronts, yes, but also to grasp as fully as possible what has happened to the fragmented man of class-society in the period of mass-production, labor-division at its highest level of expansion. Only thus can we also grasp what is carried over into socialism, not merely as the obvious "bourgeois survivals" which have been the easily shot down game of the socialist writer, but as the deep hard core of self-division, self-alienation, which distorts the very socialist process of building plenty by founding it on the instabilities, fears greeds, alienations of the thingified man. The first work from a socialist country that shows an awareness of this issue is Dudintsev's *Not By Bread Alone;** and the attacks it has provoked are a measure of the entrenched social and psychological forces in socialism which will resent and resist any such development of the essential Marxist concept of alienation.

Along such lines we can defeat the narrow and schematic views of art as a superficial educative process, which have dominated in the socialist world—and still dominate. To know what forms a man, in our world, we need also to know what has deformed him; and without undervaluing the elements of release and regeneration which are present in even the most hidebound of socialisms, we must also not undervalue the terrible grip of fear, stupefaction, inner division and alienation, which is an inescapable heritage from the past.

If we glance again at the formulations of Zhdanov, we find them riddled with the most undialectical preconceptions. Art is not seen as a dialogue between artist and people, but as something supplied on demand to the people, who, by the mere fact of a socialist economy, are supposed to have become perfectly aware of the nature of art and what they want from it. This fallacious notion of a spontaneous art-awareness in the people works out, not as letting them ask for and get what they want, but as defining authoritatively and dogmatically from above what they are to be given. In practice, it is most intensely suspicious of what is wanted. The result is that the living give-and-take between artist and people, which alone can restore health to the situation, is ruled out, and a phoney idea of spontaneity veils the facts of arbitrary control.

In the same way the fantasy-picture of the party as the pure monolithic expression of mass-will works out as the party becoming bureaucratic and authoritarian. The dialogue of the party and the people needs to become fuller, freer, more open in every way. We must see the party, not as a simple monolithic structure, but as a form concentrating social consciousness and therefore also concentrating social struggle inside and outside it. This conception leads to a new view of the nature of inner-party discussion and democracy, and breaks down the Chinese-wall between party and people—a wall which must exist while old rules of democratic

* *See discussion of Dudintsev by Ralph Parker in this issue.*

centralism are narrowly and unimaginatively clung-to under the panic belief that any relaxation, any direct linking of inner-party discussions and disagreements with the people, must lead to factionalist disintegration. And so on.

THE formulations I have made are concise and rough, but I do not think they need lead to misunderstanding on the part of anyone who approaches them with reasonable goodwill. I am aware that they are no more than generalized hints as to the new ways we need, but I think they are capable of being worked out and applied in immediately useful ways. I do not see any organization save that of my party in which such ideas can get an effective hearing and testing. Even those of us who thought we had some understanding of the complexity of the problem of creating a true socialist community have been shaken by the enormous extension of the perspective, the first real grasp of the long-distance nature of the problem in all its ramifications. Perhaps the last utopia has gone. A certain dreariness seems to settle on the mind as one estimates the spiritual Saharas, the dead weight of alienation, that we take with us into socialism; but once we get a firm grip on the issue, I think the sense of hope, exhilaration, joy can return. I feel a few glimmerings of a new liberation. It is according to the thoroughness and depth with which we now grapple with the issues, that we can shorten the period in which socialism keeps on getting built with a largely-bourgeois consciousness ("Marxism" abstractly imposed thereon); that we can really begin the withering of that poison-bloom, the State; that we can speed up the consciousness of life in all its rich wholeness and develop the whole man. Not easy matters. But surely now we begin to know the inner enemy in all his subtle variations, and can effectively challenge the distortions of Marxism. All that is great gain. And, even if we blink at moments before the Herculean tasks of changing the world and ourselves, changing our party too as part of all that, it can be done. Let us keep before us an awareness of the way in which Marxism was born, what it signifies in the freedom of mankind, and the historical forms through which it can alone be adequately developed. I remain a Communist.

Walter Lowenfels

Dear Howard:

I thought from what you told me over the telephone a few weeks ago that you had gone through a soul-shattering experience. Now I find from your *Mainstream* article that you are very much the same person.

We are going through one of those geological epochs in human history where new mountains are thrown up and old river beds flooded. Nobody will emerge as they were. Some of us will not survive at all. Those of us who come through the great upheaval will never be the same. But you, my friend, act as if you were the same.

Where are your wound stripes? Your torn and battered uniform? Your badge
n the fight for the clean word? Where is your eye-witness report on the effect of
ne Stalin Era on the development of character and personality in all our writing,
ot excluding your own?

I expected a battlescarred front line dispatch from you. Instead, you give us a
political report on the Russian situation." What I was expecting was not your
rewell to Russia but your salute to the people of the U.S.A.

Somehow you began to act in the working class movement—("the movement"—
emember?) more as a "politician" rather than as an artist. It wasn't all your fault.
fter all we cannot all be like Mao Tse Tung, both poets and politicians. In your
se, I and others are not without blame. But you, too, bear your share of the
sponsibility.

Now you have given up the Party—but you haven't given up your role as
politician." Only now you are a "politician" outside the movement, not inside it.
Politician" is in quotes because I do not grant any barrier between art and
olitics.

As a non-Communist politician, I hope you can remain inside a general area
f agreement with me about a better USA for all. But outside that, how can I
elp but see you as a one-armed politician—the kind, both in and out of the
arty, who keep their art in one hand, their politics in another?

I am not going to discuss the items in your political report. "I also am not on
bed of roses," said the Aztec Cuauhtemoc to a lieutenant groaning at his side,
s the Spanish Conquistadores were toasting their feet.

The decision you now face is, in my mind, more serious than your letter
ndicates. Are you going to join a monastery? Are you giving up your way of life?
Vhat are you actually doing in the flesh to keep your spirit alive?

You appear to be ready, with some grimace of anguish, to continue right along
ith all the comforts that Itzik Feffer and the others had to give up. What con-
erns me is not that your notice of resignation appeared in the NY *Times,* but
ıy fear that you may be accepting the *Times* view of what is news. Is it really
ews when somebody quits the CPUSA of some 20,000 members and joins the
on-Communist Party population of some 180 million?

You may ask what position I have taken in the controversy that is shaking the
ommunist movement in the USA and throughout the world. My position is clear:
am for more poetry, more dancing, more singing. I am also interested in a
evolution worth winning.

By "poetry" I don't have in mind just some lines of verse, although that is
ot excluded. What the word, poem, does today is a small thing—but a larger
ne is implied. It is one effort, along with all our other efforts, to identify and
tegrate the dignity of human personality against the world's terrific freight.

"Do you expect to live forever? That's the essence of poetry," William Carlos
Villiams wrote the other day.

Some of my best friends are, in my opinion, wrong on this issue. They act as
words were only to be used to get something done. It is known throughout
story and throughout the world—including vast populations among the Indians
the Western hemisphere—that words also have another quite different function:

as instruments of "transport," as well as of persuasion, *to move as well as to convince.*

In songs and poems, words are used for incantation, to take you out of this world and put you into communication with the "friend of the soul of man," as our Indian forbears said, that is, with the essence of things.

I am hoping that you will see that it isn't enough today just to be against the capitalist system. The experience of the industrialization of the Soviet Union convinces me more than ever that we have to oppose the abstract mechanized concept of the world that has gripped Western civilization for the past 200 years. I am not for returning to the soil, breaking the machines. I am in favor of dominating the machines via socialism, so that through them and with them we can go about the main business of living—socially and creatively.

Furthermore, I am not interested much in arguing about my view as theory. I have no doubt many can knock it down with a better theory. My main thesis is—what can I do about it? and what can others do? You still say you want to change the world? How can we change the world unless we change ourselves?

How, for example, can we help the labor movement to become a singing movement charged with enthusiasm and youth? (Truth, Marx observed, consists not only in its end result but in the way it was reached.) Can't we show people by what we do that socialism can be a singing thing; that it need not make robots of people! Isn't it the capitalist system that robs them of personality,—of humanity, makes them slaves to bread and bread alone, takes away the song of life and gives them instead a jingle telling them the bread is vitamin-enriched?

What some of us are in danger of losing in modern society is the blues, the real blues, that sense of what used to be called "the tragic joy of being alive."

Our contact with Mother Earth threatens to be nothing but the grave, threatens to leave us her orphans rather than her children. We are in danger each instant of being engulfed in the cynicism, despair, and violence that capitalist machine-culture beats into our ears and eyes night and day.

As for crimes committed in the course of building socialism—crimes against poets, too, as well as against millions of others—what is an exception under socialism, part of its birth pangs, is the rule under capitalism during its dying agonies.

A way of life has been established under the profit system. It demands along with exploitation of "inferior people" a letting of blood every so often that has destroyed hundreds of millions of lives during the past half century alone. War, not peace, seems to be the apex of capitalist culture. Its most miraculous mechanisms reach their most beautiful perfection in the H-bomb. I am stressing this dominant tone which offers one blinding resolution to all its idiocies—atomic devastation. That is one reason I say elsewhere that peace—respect for the rights of others—peace itself is the poem of our time.

One of Walt Whitman's central themes is the responsibility of the modern poet to become permeated with a sense of good health and to spread it. Can't we work together to build a society where the suicide rate goes down in the spring, reversing the contemporary trend where the number of suicides rises as the trees begin to bloom? I am hoping, Howard, that you will see that the goal of life isn't socialism, but that the goal of socialism is to live.

RiGhT FaCe

It's a Hard Life

CHAIRMAN HOTCHKISS: I am quite sure in some individuals that the stresses of life decrease potency. I am thinking of one man now who is a stockbroker. Every time the market goes down he becomes impotent. Every time it goes up he is all right.—Report of discussion at New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center.

Sibling Rivalry?

Dr. James Mann said that the psychiatric problems of the Arab peoples "which remain untreated today are undoubtedly a major factor motivating their hostile acts against one another, against their respective societies, and against Israel." . . . He proposed the establishment of an American-Israel psychiatric commission as a first step in improving "the mental health not only of Israelis but also of all Middle East peoples once peace and security are restored to this region."—The *New York Times.*

Swastika in Algiers

Robert Lacoste, French Minister in Algeria, warned that the will of the French people would not be thwarted by "nations having attained only a rudimentary level of civilization."—The *New York Times.*

Will It Work?

Los Angeles—Just two years ago Gov. Goodwin Knight flew to Los Angeles to take a personal hand in an investigation.

The villain: smog. Even as Mr. Knight wondered under its worst smog-blanket of the year, Mayor Clarence Winder called for a public prayer "to deliver us from this scourge."—The *New York Times.*

books in review

A Negro Saga

THE ORDEAL OF MANSART, by W. E. B. Du Bois. Mainstream. $3.50.

THIS IS a fascinating and an extraordinary book. It is more than extraordinary; it is in the fullest, most exact sense of the word, unique.

When, a hundred and twenty years ago, Carlyle completed his epoch-making *French Revolution* he said: ". . . they have not had for two hundred years any book that came more directly and flamingly from the heart of a living man." Certainly we have had few books since then which have presented so clearly and directly the distilled essence of a full life's thought and experience, concentrated by the power of an original highly disciplined and commanding mind.

That we tend to think of *The Ordeal of Mansart* in terms of *The French Revolution* rather than in line of descent from Tolstoi's *War and Peace* or Balzac's *Peasants* points an essential distinction. The book is really not a historical novel but narrative or fictionalized history. (Its deliberate factual accuracy makes one hesitate to use the latter, better established term. For as Dr. Du Bois himself says in conclusion: "Here lies . . . more history than fiction, more fact than assumption, much truth and no falsehood.")

The story does seize one's interest immediately and hold it throughout, but the book is nevertheless not easy reading. The very condensation of over fifty years history in some three hundred pages, the bewildering richness of factual knowledge, concrete first-hand physical observation, and profound sociological interpretation with which each page is crammed demand the reader's closest, most intelligent attention and reward a second and even a third re-reading.

The present volume, the first of a trilogy already completed for publication, covers the years from 1876 to 1916, with some substantial account of events as far back as the Civil War itself. (Van Wyck Brooks has said of the entire work that Dr. Du Bois at eighty-nine had crowned his life's accomplishment with a trilogy of three novels dramatizing the history of the Negro in the United States, which trilogy might well, from a literary point of view, prove to be his greatest single achievement.)

Beginning in South Carolina, the story soon moves, with its titular hero, Manuel Mansart, to Atlanta Georgia. There we meet, among others, Booker T. Washington and a young sociologist, Dr. Burghardt, a professor at Atlanta University which Manuel attends.

It is however, somewhat misleading to speak as though this were an ordinary historical novel with its central emphasis upon a specific hero, or even upon the life of a specific city.

Most of us remember from our early school days the sudden delight of a juvenile discovery—often in a fourth or fifth grade autograph book—that after writing our personal name, family name, street number, city and state, we could go on to complete our address by adding "U.S.A., THE WORLD, THE SOLAR SYSTEM, THE UNIVERSE." Something akin to this exhilaration, on a more meaningful level, grows steadily throughout our reading as we realize with new immediacy how central the course of events in Atlanta, Georgia, is to the entire history of the United States.

Of course we are much concerned with the life and fortunes of Manuel Mansart. But we are simultaneously aware that while he is a well realized individual he is also, and even more essentially, the particular pebble his creator has thrown into the pool of history in order to show us the concentric circle which will ripple outward from this center, spreading far beyond late nineteenth century Washington and Wall Street in both space and time.

Yet this image is really too simple a one for the pattern of the book, which is actually composed of a large number of such intersecting series of circles. Some of these begin with other equally fictional pebbles like Tom Mansart, Aunt Betsy, Scroggs, Colonel Breckinridge, or Miss Freiberg; many center about such historical characters as Booker T. Washington, Tom Watson the Populist leader, Sebastian Doyle his Negro adviser, one-eyed Tillman who later became governor of Georgia, the rabid anti-Negro crusader of Mississippi, Vardaman, whose name Faulkner has already made a symbol, Henry Grady, prophet of the new industrial south, and young Dr. Burghardt himself.

There are also a huge number of less easily recognized figures like the great northern financier, Pierce; Professor Baldwin, a southern scholar too dedicated to maintain any prejudice against any student who can really master Greek; and John Sheldon, the unscrupulous speculator son of a devoted abolitionist educator. These characters are, I suspect, denied their rightful historical place through my ignorance rather than the author's intention. Since many other readers may be as ignorant it would, I believe, be of real value to add an index of historical names at the end of the book or, at least, of the trilogy.

The desire for such an appendix illustrates the unusual way in which fact and fiction have here been integrated. In his "Postscript" which should be read (and should, I think, have been placed) as a foreword, Dr. Du Bois says:

> In the great tragedy of Negro slavery in the United States and its aftermath, much of documented history is lacking because of the deep feeling involved and the fierce desire of men to defend their fathers and themselves. This I have sought to correct in my study of the slave trade and of Reconstruction. If I had had time and money, I would have continued this pure historical research. But this opportunity failed and Time is running out. Yet I would rescue from my long experience something of what I have learned and conjec-

tured and thus I am trying by the method of historical fiction to complete the cycle of history which has for half a century engaged my thought, research and action.

This is a precise and definitive statement of its author's purpose, and sets the frame of reference in which his book should be read. For despite many dramatic scenes and moments heavy with suspense the story does not attempt to make us forget ourselves in its development, identify ourselves with its hero, or find the entire history of a period epitomized in any one character's life and fortunes. Nor are we intended to find the psychological processes of men —good or bad—of absorbing interest in themselves.

The author does analyze the choices men make, the forces of circumstance and character which determine them, and the effects of their decisions or undeliberate actions on themselves and others; but he is concerned with these primarily for practical purposes, like a statesman or historian, and not for their own sake as a psychologist or portrait painter might be.

Similarly, while the direct dialogue is often dramatic or humorous, the main concern is generally to present a speaker's attitude and ideas in concise summary rather than to convey nuances of individuality or personal relationships through his speech.

This approach may seem to involve the risk of creating stiff or superficial figures—types if not stereotypes—and certainly it has proven dangerous for many sociological novelists. But here the overwhelming wealth of the author's knowledge, his detailed understanding of the world in which his figures act, and his scrupulous concern to present the subtle social and cultural differences within each political group or economic class, prove an ample safeguard. We are, in fact, repeatedly impressed by the complicated network of customs, habits, needs and desires which determine the simplest human consciousness and affect its actions. Of course we are almost always aware that people are being presented to us in the barest outline, with only enough analysis for practical purposes, but we never feel that they are romantic or idealized constructions. On the contrary, we feel that the author has observed the anonymous fictional figures in much the same way as he has observed the well known historical ones, and that he is presenting us in both cases with only as much of a brief shorthand summary as is necessary for his purpose of historical explanation.

Thus, despite the book's great compression, we never feel that either people or events are being oversimplified. But we do sometimes feel ourselves rather breathlessly hurried along, and wish we could stop to learn more of them or of certain crucial moments in their lives. We wish we could linger for a fuller discussion of such an amazing phenomenon as Tom Watson's sudden virulent racism, for an argument about the sincerity and significance of young Theodore Roosevelt's trust-busting, for a more intimate view of Tom Mansart's metamorphosis from illiterate farm worker to farm organizer and legislator, for further consideration of Manuel Mansart's relations with his wife and children.

We also feel rushed, although exhila

ted, by the way in which the book rries us through event after event hich we have long vaguely known but ver quite understood. Over and over ain some revealing glimpse of a his-rical fact past which our story moves kes us exclaim: "So that's why . . .!" "No wonder they had to . . .!" Some of these illuminations are pro-undly disquieting. A major example the painful picture which emerges the long continued hatred and des-uctiveness in the relations of Negro d white labor. True, we are shown w this antagonism was manipulated d fostered by the upper classes whose erests it served, but the emphasis in detailed history of its initiative and ganization are very different from t which we have come to take for nted in most progressive histories historical novels of the period. Al-ough the book does not even touch on the subject, here the reader gains w insight into some of the causes the extreme insensitivity of early erican socialism to the entire prob-n of special race exploitation and race ations in the United States, and the iprocal indifference to that philosophy the most devoted and forward look-early Negro leaders.

The work leaves us with a thirst for ther knowledge of this as well as ny other subjects—with eagerness only for the next two volumes of trilogy but for more, much more, ut the people and events already sented in the first volume. It is not estful book, a book in which to lose self. It is rather a book in which begin finding oneself—and one's ntry.

ANNETTE RUBINSTEIN

Sequel to Spain

THE UN-AMERICANS, by Alvah Bessie, Cameron Associates. $4.75.

TAKING as his subject the Congressional witch-hunt of our time, which with its screams of "Communist menace" has so dangerously undermined the democratic rights of the American people, Alvah Bessie has written a courageously outspoken and hard-hitting novel, the best, I think, yet written on this theme. Bessie sees this witch-hunt as fascist in intention and mentality. Accordingly he deals with it through two battles, separated in history by ten years, but with the same leading characters. In the novel they run concurrently, the episodes from "past" and "present" sensitively and adroitly linked. One starts with the Civil War in Spain, presenting scenes of the American volunteers in the International Brigade, and continues through most of the Second World War. The other is the 1948 inquisition of the Congressional Committee on Un-American Activities, which blacklisted many writers and even jailed some of them on trumped-up charges of "perjury" and "contempt." Bessie knows both battles intimately, having fought in Spain and having been one of the first Hollywood blacklisted writers. He was also honored by being put in jail for "contempt."

There are two central characters. One, Ben Blau, is a journalist with sympathies for labor, and a passionate interest in distinguishing truth from lies, that make him suspiciously, "unobjective" to his commercial employers. Going to Spain as a newspaper corre-

spondent, when his understanding of the war mounts along with his hatred of fascism, he joins the International Brigade. He commands a company in the major battles near the end of the war. On the way home, he joins the Communist Party, and back in the States, writes a book about Spain. When the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor, he enlists in the army. His next battle however is not with the fascist axis but with the army brass, who see him as a suspicious character because of his "premature anti-fascism" in Spain, and regard him as fit for nothing better than kitchen police. He finally manages to get into an infantry outfit, is wounded in France and decorated for bravery. Back as a civilian, he finds making a living as a writer increasingly difficult as the Cold War hysteria mounts. He is haled before the witch-hunt Congressional committee investigating "infiltration" in the arts and letters (his book on Spain happened to land on the list of books republished by the army during the war). He defies the committee, and is then tried on a "perjury" charge, an informer having been procured to swear against him.

The informer is the other main character, Francis Xavier Lang. Lang like Ben started public life as the writer of a series of poetic dramas which brought little reward but some praise from the critics. He then rose high as a journalist on world affairs, boasting of his personal friendship with Franklin D. Roosevelt. He too covers the war in Spain, and there he meets Ben, for whom he feels a deep admiration. Lang's relation to the war is ambiguous. He admires the Republicans, and despises Franco and his forces. He falls in love with a militant Spanish Republican woman and Communist, who is killed in an air raid. But his dispatches are praised at home as being "non-partisan," and he is also secretly committed to pass along information on the Spanish Republican forces to the United States military intelligence. This double-dealing he carries on with a certain mixture of shame and cynicism. Back home he also joins the Communist Party, but quits it shortly after. In the interim, he helps Ben Blau get his book on Spain published, and he himself produces a far more successful (and less truthful) book and play on Spain. During the Second World War, he lands a comfortable publicity job with the army. The war over, he rises to the heights of a glamorous and highly paid radio news commentator. He, too, is caught in the witch-hunt net of 1948. At first his attitude towards the Committee is one of complete contempt. But the prospect of his being publicly smeared, of losing his radio sponsor and of even being charged with perjury (his short spell with the Communist Party has been discovered) proves too much for him. He saves the situation by becoming an informer against Ben Blau.

The novel has a considerable cast of characters, some of them being thinly disguised or composite versions of actual people in the public eye. These secondary characters are sharp and vivid. But it is in the story of Ben's growth and Lang's deterioration that not only the main merits of the novel reveal themselves, but also its comparative failures. For while both characterizations are effective enough to become as the characters of a work of art should

become, a living part of the social history of our time, neither is wholly successful.

The reason lies, I think, in the difficult and exacting tasks that Bessie has set himself in writing so completely political a novel. This is in my opinion (with which readers are of course free to differ), the highest type of novel possible today. It is also a basic principle of the novel, as of all works of art, that it speaks not through its flat statements, but through the quality of its characters as real human beings; their ability to move the readers, by appearing to embody in themselves something of the readers' own humanity. And it is also, I would say, a law of the novel, that the more complex the outer life it presents—of politics and society—the more complex must be the inner life of its personages. In the last analysis, it is true that every personal portrait in a work of art is by implication a social portrait. Every inner conflict is a reflection of some conflict going on in society, however devious the path of connection. A subjective novelist, of course, sees only the inner conflict. And this accordingly seems to him to be the product of mysterious forces, the "mystery of life," the "tragedy of man," the malignancy of nature, the eternal recurrence of primitive archetypes. A social novelist sees and traces the connection between inner and outer. Thus social life appears to be both something made by people, and something that reacts back upon them. To accomplish this is much more difficult than giving a political figure some episodes of sex life, or an assortment of frailties, to prove that he is a "human being," (nor does Bessie ever descend to this level). Actually in this process of constantly checking "inner" against "outer," everything disappears that is purely naturalistic in both areas, that is only personal, accidental or irrelevant in the light of the main themes of the book.

THIS IS the process that Bessie adopts, and he carries it a long way, if not to its consummation. There is fine psychological dissection in the portrait of the informer, Lang. A primary motive is his desire for money and a comfortable life. As Lang's wife says, "He has an absolute horror of being poor again." But there are deeper matters. His is the loneliness of self-centered people, and the lack of faith in others which might give him a sense of real strength. He has no belief that the ordinary people, who make up the vast body of the world's population, can actually be the bearers of progress. And so the progressive life into which he dips his fingers appears not as a source of growth, but as a kind of martyrdom. The forces of evil are too strong. They must win. Why should he elect to be a hero? "Mr. Lincoln, he thought, what good does it do you now to have the flags flying in honor of your birthday. They murdered you, didn't they? They shot you down in cold blood. . . ." Bessie shows keenly how Lang's contempt for others in the end envelops himself as well. He traces the relation between this self-contempt and Lang's alcoholism, together with his promiscuous and brutal sex relations. And yet there is something missing in the picture of Lang. He was certainly once a human being of quality. He had a potential which became

distorted and defiled. Bessie's treatment, having made its points, proceeds to belabor them. Lang emerges as a repulsive monster. I am not asking that he be made more "sympathetic"; only that he appear less completely alien to the readers, for otherwise, what is there to be learned from him?

Ben Blau is presented as the opposite of a school-book hero. He is a shy, self-effacing person, and in fact his distinguishing characteristic, which makes him the opposite of Lang, is that he thinks of himself as someone of no importance. He stands with the common people of Spain, and of the United States, because he would scoff at the thought that he is anybody better than they. They have become his people, and he trusts them. In fact, his trust extends even to those who would harm him. All this is fine. But about Ben too, as he emerges from the book, there is something incomplete. It is obvious, of course, that he is intimately tied to Alvah Bessie himself. And I think that in order to realize fully the character of Ben, it would have been necessary for Bessie to examine more clearly his own life as a progressive writer, journalist, novelist, and fighter in Spain. I am not saying that Ben Blau is an autobiographical picture of Alvah Bessie, or that he should be one, but rather the opposite. Only by such a clear self-appraisal could Bessie have detached himself sufficiently from Ben, so that he could create in Ben the kind of objective character he wanted to create. Because this is not done, Ben becomes a character whose integrity readers will admire, but whose inhibited emotional expression deprives us of the chance to establish full rapport with him. Sometimes he is a character in his own right, and sometimes he is a mouthpiece for Bessie. There are episodes—Ben's relations to his first wife for example—which seem to be inserted because they are a piece of life, or concerned someone Bessie knew, but their relevance to the line of the book is unclear. This is not so of Ben's relations to his father, or to his businessman brother, which are eloquently and movingly presented.

Perhaps some details will illustrate the failure of Bessie to follow through the creative tasks he set himself. There is the dialogue for example. It is often very witty and polished. But the writer falls back too often upon a wise-cracking mannerism, as if each character were setting up a punning defense against the others. Here is an exchange between Ben Blau and Sue Menken, the woman with whom he falls in love after his first wife leaves him:

"Are you free for dinner?"

"Dinner's never free. Who's paying?"

"You're working full time, aren't you?" she said. "Or have you changed your name to Scrooge?"

"Blau's the name—means Blue. We'll go Dutch."

"Goody, goody gumdrop," Sue said. "I'll drop by your room if it's OK by you."

"OK," he said.

"You sound positively thrilled to death," she said.

A similar coarseness creeps into other conversations and crucial scenes, preventing the reader from appreciating the depth and complexity of the characters' feelings. It could be argued that people do speak like that, and exchange puns instead of thoughts. But there are

lso times when they don't speak like
iat. And it would seem to be the task
f a novelist, to whom every word
ıould be precious, to select or create
ialogue more truly revelatory of his
ıaracters' uniqueness of mind and per-
ɔnality. The same is true of the over-
equent use of obscenities, which I
bject to, not because they can shock
nybody in this day, but because they
and in the way of using speech as a
ensitive instrument to reveal a human
ersonality.

Then there is the politics. A good
eal of it is thrown at the reader; Spain,
ie United Front against fascism, the
939 pact between the Soviet Union
nd Hitler, the Finnish war, the Sec-
nd Front, the Cold War and the witch-
unt. I am all for this, and would not
ave Bessie eliminate one iota of it.
ut here it is in part undigested poli-
cs. A nineteenth century novelist, like
Iugo, Stendahl or Tolstoi, would have
mply presented it as part of the back-
round against which his characters op-
ate. But Bessie must do this in the
ıodern "artistic" way, by dragging it
ıto the characters' dialogue, their ar-
ıments, their musings.

This not only gives a certain artificial-
y to the dialogue itself. It actually
orks against the very aim of bringing
this politics, namely to educate the
ader. The reader is simply told things,
hich he may or may not believe. Some
ings in the book—the inner Com-
unist party club discussions for in-
ance will, I am afraid, be understand-
ɔle only to those who already know
hat Bessie is talking about. Others, I
ink, will simply feel that Bessie de-
ands premises from them which they
e not willing to grant.

THE NOVEL becomes the kind of book that the progressive movement will call "one of ours;" to which I can add both "hurrah" and also "alas." There is a profound truth behind the concept of "one of ours," like "art is a weapon." It is that a battle is going on between progress and reaction, with human life at stake; that great writing is partisan; that only those who are on the side of progress, who have no stake in reaction, who desire to exploit nobody, who want to open up paths for human development, can afford the whole truth. But there is also a misapplication of this concept. It is that the battle between progress and reaction is reflected in the presence of "two worlds of culture," which can have no common meeting ground, which can not even understand each other. This is untrue. The great progressive writers, Maxim Gorky for example, have proved otherwise; when their art is firmly rooted in the realities of life that all people share, it can move them, whatever their politics.

If I raise these questions in relation to Alvah Bessie's novel, it is not only because the novel itself raises them, but also because he is one of the finest creative talents the American left has produced. Each of his works—and they are too few—has shown great promise; his first novel, *Dwell in the Wilderness,* his book on Spain, *Men in Battle,* his poignant short novel, *Bread and a Stone.* Yet his best work is still before him. The *Un-Americans* combines a sense of fine achievement with one of unfulfillment. There are great things in it: the scenes in Spain, the scenes of battle in France, all of them wrung from the heart; the brilliant and telling

scenes before the Congressional investigating committee. And every episode in this book displays the operation of a keen and enlightened mind, and a sharp pen. The book is in part a powerful social novel, and in part Alvah Bessie's own defiant statement and challenge to the high and mighty pseudo-patriotic hypocrites, the true conspirators against American democracy, the friends of fascism. And one thing emerges as a true artistic creation, not said in words but part of the living fibre of the book. It is that the battles for progress of which it speaks, which seem to be lost—Franco still rules in Spain, and the witch-hunters are still riding high—are not lost. They will be won.

SIDNEY FINKELSTEIN

Latin American Facts

THE GROWTH AND CULTURE OF LATIN AMERICA, by Donald E. Worcester and Wendell G. Schaeffer. Oxford University Press. $8.50.

LATIN AMERICA is *terra incognita* for most North Americans. Few educated Englishmen are as ignorant of French history and culture as most educated Americans are of the history and culture of Mexico despite the annual tourist tide to that country. As for other parts of Latin America, they are hardly more than names on a map—or in a quiz show. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that this ignorance and the prejudices that often go with it are in large measure by-products of the master-servant relationship that has existed between the United States and Latin America for so many years.

Good books on Latin America are therefore welcome not only for their own sake, but as rays of light penetrating a too pervasive darkness and as means of fostering greater understanding of the peoples to the South of us. *The Growth and Culture of Latin America* is one of the better books on the subject. Unfortunately, like others in this field, it is very long and the average reader may therefore be discouraged from seeking its rewards. Yet even so large a book (over 900 pages) cannot encompass all the rich variety of historical experience, problems and culture of the twenty Latin American republics and nearly as many colonies.

The Growth and Culture of Latin America is well organized and well written. It attempts to give an integrated view of Latin American history by first dealing with forces and trends common to the whole area or particular regions and then relating the history of individual countries to these broad common phenomena. The general point of view is liberal.

The authors' account of the conquest and the three centuries of Spanish and Portuguese rule underplays the economic factors and mutes the barbarities of the alien civilizers. Yet their story provides enough to indicate the role that Latin America played in that "rosy dawn of the era of capitalistic production" which, as Marx noted in *Capital*, was signalized by "the discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population," and similar "idyllic proceedings" in the East Indies and Africa.

In dealing with the Mexican inde-
ndence struggle, whose active phase
ened in 1810 with the Indian upris-
g led by the revolutionary priest,
dalgo, Prof. Worcester and Dr.
haeffer inject what seems to me a
torting class and possibly race preju-
e. The frequent use of such expres-
ns as "ignorant Indians" and
ordes" serves to obscure the tre-
ndous positive significance, despite
stakes and failures of the movement
dalgo led. Hidalgo himself is treated
sympathetically, and the attempt to
pict him as at the end a traitor to
own cause—whatever the facts of
dalgo's alleged retraction after his
pture by the Spaniards—is a perver-
n of the meaning of an historic
ure who is revered by all Mexicans
the Father of their country.

One of the virtues of the book is that
the most part it does not equivocate
the economic and political role of
United States today as the heir of
early *conquistadores.* And the
thors also make clear that the Latin
nerican peoples are by no means ac-
iescent in this imperialist overlord-
p. The book's view of this basic
ntemporary conflict is, however, not
thout its confusions. To describe the
at Nicaraguan patriot, Sandino, as
unworthy bandit" is to stand his-
y on its head, particularly since the
ok leaves me no doubt that the real
ndits, the U.S. invaders, against
om Sandino fought, had no business
ing in Nicaragua. Similarly, anti-
mmunist prejudice often causes the
thors to substitute State Department
paganda about "Red plots" for ob-
tive investigation, and to justify the
ashington-instigated overthrow of the democratic government of Guatemala in 1954.

The book's title is unfortunate in that it raises expectations it does not fulfil. The work is actually a political history, and cultural phenomena are treated peripherally and meagerly. Thus Mexico's great mural movement gets only brief notice and the only artists mentioned are the "Big Three": Orozco Rivera and Siqueiros. There are also many omissions in regard to the cultural life of other countries; perhaps least excusable is the failure even to mention one of Latin America's greatest thinkers, educators and political leaders, Eugenio Maria de Hostos of Puerto Rico, whose fame has been growing since his death more than a half century ago.

For all its shortcomings, *The Growth and Culture of Latin America* has substantial virtues. It is a useful guide to that part of the western hemisphere whose history still awaits discovery by most North Americans.

A. B. MAGIL

Books Received

CONVERSATIONS WITH CASALS, by J. M. Corredor. E. P. Dutton. $3.75.

OLIN DOWNES ON MUSIC, edited by Irene Downes. Simon and Schuster. $5.00.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR IN MUSIC, Aaron Copland. McGraw-Hill. $3.95.

THE ENGLISH version of the *Conversations With Casals* has been eagerly awaited by musicians and students of music since its appearance was

announced last year abroad. For Casals has been for more than half a century a symbol of the profoundest musical artistry, technical mastery, and courageous humanism. This 80-year old cellist knew and played with them all—Ysaye, Kreisler, Thibaud, Cortot, Enesco; he even heard Joachim play the Beethoven concerto, and had talks on music with a man who had been a friend of Beethoven's. Yet he is also the man who decided to go into seclusion in protest at the failure of the Western powers to bring a democratic regime to his beloved Spain. He thus exemplifies perhaps more than any single living artist the unbreakable humanist conception of the artist as a "Dichter," as a poet-leader of his fellow human beings. He poured this conception into his playing of Bach and Beethoven so that his performances are an endless revelation of beauty and truth. In a world where society fears this moral conception of beauty, Casals' activity as a musician keeps alive the great tradition without which music is nothing but what some recent theorists like to call "sound."

The interviewer asked Casals hundreds of questions about his life, his technical problems, his views on men, composers, and conductors. To read them is to feel the stimulation of a noble musical and critical intelligence. "Only today," he replied one afternoon, "when I was playing one of Bach's Partitas on the piano, I thought to myself as I always do how it is that 'purists' don't realize that following the written notes *a la lettre* is a mistaken course, quite contrary to the music itself? The written note is like a straightjacket, whereas music, like life itself, is constant movement, continuous spontaneity, free from any restriction." It is one of Casal's secrets that he gives music this spontaneity without violating its formal beauty, and without any "method" he provides many glimpses here technically, on how he does it.

Casals spoke to many of Liszt's pupils but could never get from them just how Liszt taught them; it was almost an incommunicable thing, yet it was a tangible influence. Casals is like that. Sometimes the interviewer tantalizes us and then goes off on a tangent, such as when he asks Casals about the grandeur of Ysaye's violin conceptions, but does not go beyond Casals' admiring remark that he was "dazzling." The book is, however, absorbing and beautiful, a treasure for musicians and laymen alike.

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Olin Downes' fifty-year career as a music critic, mainly on the *New York Times*, was marked by honesty, taste, and above all by his refusal to give way to the snobberies of avant-garde cultisms. He could face a piece of contemporary music without any false posturing or prejudice and test it on the touchstone he always used—whether it genuinely expresses some experience, some feeling, some truth. His opinions stand up long after they were written to meet newspaper deadlines. If he did not search into the more complex questions of musical aesthetics (he was after all a day-by-day worker in the field), he embodied good sense and the healthy instincts of the people; he was a defender of music against decay. This volume shows him as he was. Edited by his wife (who thanks Sidney Finkel-

stein among others for help), it is part of the musical history of New York.

Aaron Copland's lucid and thoughtful introduction to music and its forms is welcome in this revised edition. It is still one of the best in the field.

THE LEGION OF THE DAMNED, by Sven Hassel. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. $3.75.

IN THIS age of synthetic products, one may expect to find books that are fabricated of one man's experience, a second man's feeling—or lack of it—and still another's ideas—or dearth of them. We are told that this is "a documentary novel which has captured the attention of all Europe," that it is ninety percent fact, and that the writer, whose name is not really Sven Hassel, has been influenced by Erich Maria Remarque, Hasek, Hemingway, and Steinbeck. To round out the self-portrait of this rather patchwork author, he tells us that he is fighting for the full freedom of the individual human being without restriction of any kind.

But there is a suspicious discrepancy between the behavior and the ideals of this Danish citizen who claims to have been mobilized into the Nazi army; who deserted; was put into a concentration camp; incorporated into a penal regiment; captured, tortured and brainwashed by guess-who, and on and on. If he has no illusions, he has also no grasp of meaning. He is the mechanical man par excellence, for whom there is no distinction between what he does and what happens to him. If a man is intrigued by killing, if he kills equally out of necessity and to asuage his vanity, how can one be reassured by his moral platitudes and expressions of regret?

IN NEED OF BACK COPIES

Because of the great demand for our March issue, we have run short and are in need of back copies for binding and for our files. Will readers who have no further use for this issue please send us their copies.

Letter

Editors, *Mainstream*:

Joseph Starobin has made some unflattering but not necessarily untrue remarks about Howard Fast's career as a writer; yet, curiously, they add up to an untrue picture of Fast's significance and amount to an unwarranted political attack on the Soviet Union. To Starobin, the worldwide fame of this writer seems to be evidence of a plot, a conspiracy, another crime of the Soviet leaders. They needed, he says, an American literary hero on their side, and they built up Fast into a world figure out of all proportions to his limited talents. Basically, his explanation is of the same kind as any ordinary anti-Soviet crack in the *New York Times*.

No, the Soviet leaders did not have to invent any Howard Fast. He existed and he was liked and admired because he has an artist's imagination, wonderful story-telling gifts, and a good deal if not enough social and historical understanding. Nor did the Soviet leaders need "a certain portrait of American life." The leaders and peoples in the socialist countries, like people everywhere, need the truth, and they have an instinct for it. They get more truth from Howard Fast than from most. I think it is significant that Starobin says that Soviet leaders "had kept their hard-working folk from understanding contemporary America, its good and its bad, through Faulkner and Hemingway and Richard Wright, Eudora Welty and others." What does that have to do with the simplest kind of fact? *Freedom Road* tells more truth about what poor American whites and Negroes have been, and are, and can be than all the books of Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Hemingway and even Richard Wright. This is not the place for this to be argued, but it can be proved. To make but one point, Wright's Negroes are the same as Faulkner's; they are not at all like the Negroes who made the Montgomery bus strike. These are clearly brothers and sisters to the humane, creative, resourceful Negroes of *Freedom Road*.

In Fast's books Soviet readers feel they have found a good deal of our democratic tradition, of what is growing, hopeful and human in American life. We can guess that some of his work is too glib, too hasty; yet what a long list of books ranging from good to fine he has given us on important subjects in our national history. Here is a real writer. A great deal of what he writes is good (let us avoid the abused word "great" for a century or so). He has not failed us; I believe he has done his job as he could, being who and what he is and where, in space and time. But we have perhaps failed him and we have no right to join with Starobin in throwing rocks at the Soviet Union. They have their own problems; they have struggled and died by the millions for us and for Howard Fast as well as for themselves and we aren't really so wise nor so pure that we can advise them or gasp in righteous horror at their methods and mistakes. I don't think Howard Fast either has earned the right to make blanket condemnations. I think he should study the Chinese for humility. But I'll bet he can write some more good books —maybe a lot more. At worst, he's hardly any worse than the rest of us. This is not breast-beating but looking at facts.

LOIS BARNES